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Horizons in Semitic Studies
Articles for the Student

edited by

J. H. Eaton

מרחקים בסמיטיקה
מאמרים לסטודנטים

עריכת: י. ה. איטון

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After the production of several Hebrew study aids (listed on the back cover) the awful plight of the would-be student of Syriac could not be ignored. The available text-books were generally of such an antiquated or dry character that even the teachers took fright. Once again, the Muffield Foundation encouraged me, awarding a grant to support a project for the teaching of Syriac. While a new course book of 'First Studies in Syriac' was being written for the project by John Healey (providing grammar, exercises, annotated texts and glossary), I sought the help of a number of scholars to compile a volume of introductory articles chiefly on the literature and life reached through the language, - and the present volume is the result. We are most indebted to our secretary, Anne Bowen, who has typed the work and cheerfully supported this and the Hebrew project in every way. Indispensable too has been the ever-helpful staff of the Offset Litho Unit of Birmingham University.

The first four articles are directly on matters Syriac, while the others look at related areas which may just be coming on to the student's horizon. In all cases I invited the contributors to write of things that they themselves had found interesting, and I think the occasional personal touches will help to pass on the enthusiasm which is essential for successful study.

Sebastian Brock's article is of fundamental importance. He has provided an authoritative and comprehensive introduction to the Syriac field, such as was hitherto unobtainable. Then Peter Robson shares with us his interest in the great Syriac poet, St. Ephrem, and especially illustrates his highly allusive style. Frances Young explains why Syriac is an indispensable tool for study of early Christian doctrine, liturgy and history, and through her article we become aware of the importance of Syriac as vehicle of an early Christian tradition that, like the Founder and his first followers, was Semitic. The astonishing field of Syrian asceticism is Susan Ashbrook's topic, and she shows us what wealth it offers the student equipped with Syriac, whether as historian of church and society, literary critic, or folklorist.

From the Syriac form of Aramaic, we then turn to the Aramaic of the Targums, and Peter Jerrome intrigues us with examples of their rendering of Exodus, enough to awaken interest in all sorts of fascinating topics, not least the way Scripture was in ancient times regarded and received, - anything but passively! With Martin Goodman's article we move further into the Hebrew area, but in a period when the Rabbinic learning moved easily between Hebrew and Aramaic: he shares with us his own experience of the value of such Jewish sources for the historian of the Roman Empire. Last one who has learned basic biblical Hebrew think that now learning and research must wholly be transferred to neighbouring fields, we have included an article on some deeper mysteries of Hebrew grammar. Grace Emerson has here treated a selection of topics which tend to come into post-elementary studies rather unannounced, and she shows how soon one reaches the areas where experts disagree and the student needs a keen instinct for research and an independent judgment to find his way profitably. Needless to say, knowledge of cognate languages such as Syriac is extremely useful in these questions.

The great Akkadian tradition, where men of Assyria and Babylonia carried forward, with their own contribution, so much from Sumeria, is of course a field for all Semitists to be aware of, though only some will be able to give it that specialisation which it requires, and we are fortunate indeed to have an authoritative introduction by Wilfred Lambert. Again, all students of the Semitic world, however early their period, should be aware of the immense and fascinating riches of Arab culture and language. Whether or not 'God gives us the strength' to become fluent in that language, which rolls from the mouth of a skilled reciter like the music of a mighty organ, it is good to have Penelope Johnstone's article to kindle our interest. To her also we owe the illustrative inscriptions:

on p. 100 the Bismillah (bi-smi-llāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm, 'In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate') in Nash script; p. 101 the same in Thuluth script; p. 103 'Allah' in Ruq'a script (on right) and Fārisī (Persian) script; p. 105 the Bismillah in Diwani script; p. 106 'Peace be your companion' (ṭaḥiḡatuka-s-salām) in Kufic script; p. 107 the Bismillah in two examples of Diwani script; p. 108 'the Arabic script' ('al-khaṭṭ-l-'arabi); p. 109 the Bismillah in Fārisī script; p. 110 the Bismillah squared off in Kufic script; p. 111 'He' - God- (huwa) four times, squared off in Kufic script, and (below) the Bismillah in Rihani script.

Were one to saunter daily through the busy old streets of Petworth, Sussex, with a head full of biblical and Rabbinic lore, one would be likely to make some interesting correlations. Such is the stuff of Peter Jerrome's poetry, a kind of Sussex Targum, and I am grateful that he has allowed me once again to include a few examples. Once more, also, I have to thank the Rev. H. St. J. Hart for writing the cover-page to the delight of all concerned. For his texts he has chosen the Targum of Isaiah 12.3 (with its strikingly free interpretation whereby 'water' becomes 'new teaching' joyfully received) and the request for Aramaic discourse in 2 Kings 18.26. A first taste of Biblical Aramaic was given by Herbert Adams in *Readings in Biblical Hebrew II*, while John Healey introduced a sample of Ugaritic in vol. I (see back cover).

Our studies mean that mentally at least we are travellers in Semitic lands, lands of ancient and hospitable customs. May we travel with the love that Gertrude Bell knew and expressed in the story of her journey through Syria, ending thus:

As we jogged down towards the shining sea by green and flowery slopes that were the last of Syria, Mikhail and I fell into conversation. We reviewed, as fellow travellers will, the incidents of the way, and remembered the adventures that had befallen us by flood and field, and at the end I said:

'Oh Mikhail, this is a pleasant world, though some have spoken ill of it, and for the most part the children of Adam are good not evil.'

'It is as God wills,' said Mikhail.

'Without doubt,' said I. 'But consider, now, those whom we have met upon our journey, and think how all were glad to help us, and how well they used us ...'

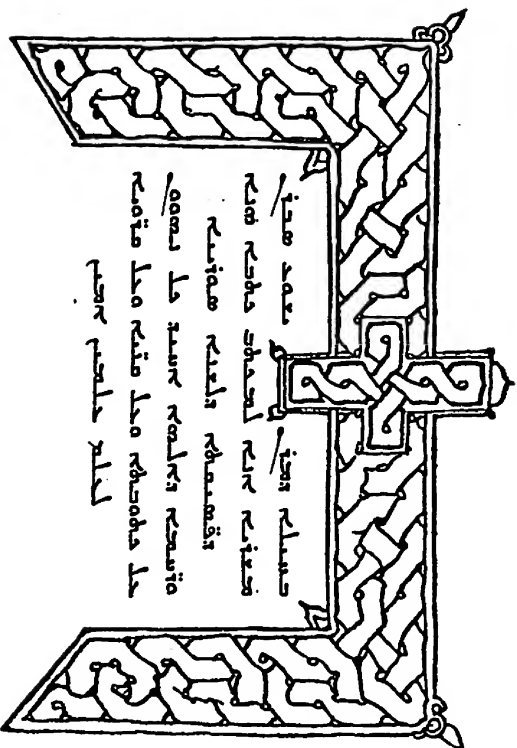
'Listen, oh lady,' said Mikhail, 'and I will make it clear to you. Men are short of vision, and they see but that for which they look. Some look for evil and they find evil! some look for good and it is good that they find, and moreover some are fortunate and these find always what they want. Praise be to God! to that number you belong. And, please God! you shall journey in peace and return in safety to your own land, and there you shall meet his Excellency your father, and your mother and all your brothers and sisters in health and in happiness, and all your relations and friends,' added Mikhail comprehensively, 'and again many times shall you travel in Syria with peace and safety and prosperity, please God!'

'Please God!' said I.

(Syria, the Desert and the Sown, 1907)

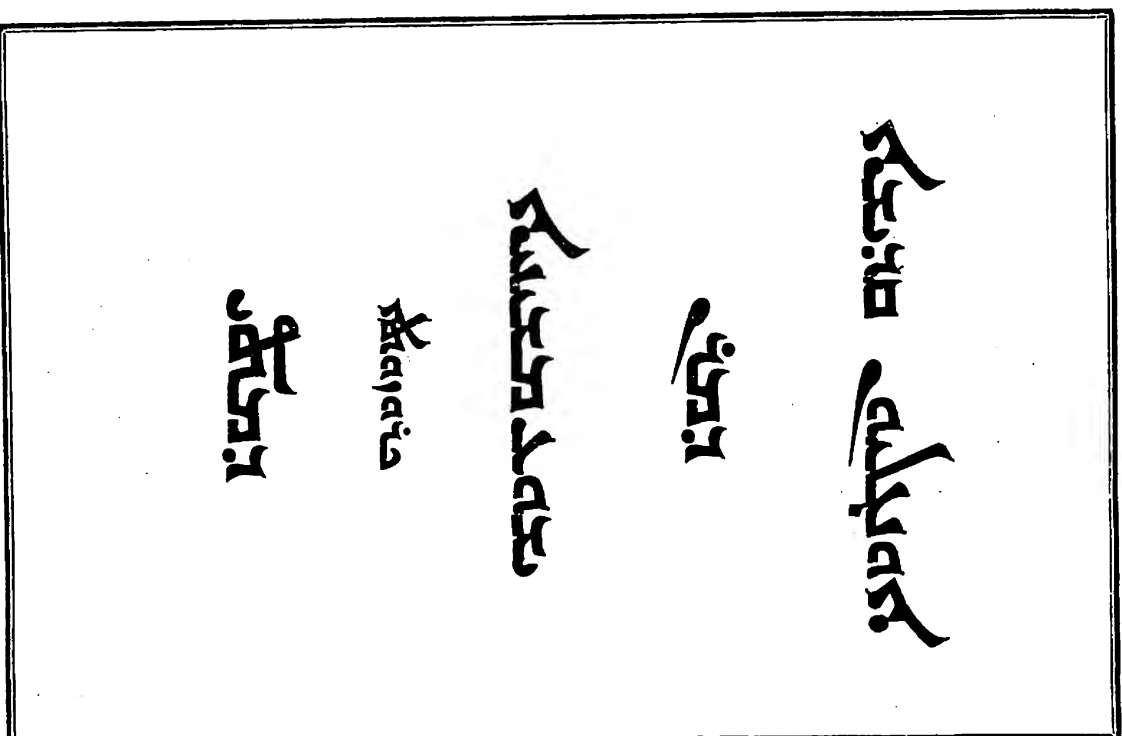
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December 1979



'In the strength of our Lord Jesus our hope, I begin to write this book of the Syriac language in brief. And may the mercies of God, upholder of all, be upon this book and upon its owners and upon its readers for ever and ever, Amen!'

So Jessie Payne Smith begins her very useful dictionary (1903). See below, p. 17.



The title for Matthew's Gospel in the Mosul Bible (1887-92). See below, p. 20.

AN INTRODUCTION TO SYRIAC STUDIES

by Sebastian Brock

- I What is Syriac?
- II Why study it? Some areas of interest :
 - (a) Biblical studies
 - (b) Patristic studies
 - (c) Liturgical studies
 - (d) Early Syriac Christianity
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 - (f) Syriac as a bridge culture
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 - (a) Grammars
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I What is Syriac?

A five minute walk from South Ealing underground station in London will bring you to 'Assyrian House', where on a Sunday the Liturgy of the Church of the East is celebrated in Syriac. One of the first things that a visitor will be told is that Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic, the language of Jesus in first-century Palestine, a fact of which all members of this Church are extremely proud.

Syriac in fact continues to-day in use as the liturgical language of two Oriental Orthodox churches, the 'Assyrian' Church of the East (better known to western Christians under the misleading title of the 'Nestorian' Church) and the Syrian Orthodox Church (again more familiar under the nick-names of the 'Jacobite' or 'Monophysite' Church)*. To a lesser extent Syriac is also used in the Liturgy of the Maronite Church, but in recent decades Arabic has been making rapid inroads there at the expense of Syriac.

But classical Syriac is by no means just a 'dead' liturgical language: it is still employed as a literary language, especially among the Syrian Orthodox, and in some circles it is even spoken (it is the normal language of communication, for example, in the Syrian Orthodox monastic school of Mar Gabriel in Tur Abdin, in SE Turkey, where the children may come from Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish or Turoyo (modern Syriac) speaking backgrounds). Within the present century several European works of literature have been translated into Syriac - including Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice and Dickens' Tale of Two Cities.

II Why study it?

But just as people do not learn Hebrew in order to read the Hebrew translation of Goethe's Faust, so no one is going to learn Syriac for the purpose of reading Dickens; nor is anyone to-day likely to find it useful (as St Hilarion did, according to his biographer Jerome) for exorcizing possessed Bactrian camels. There are, however, other incentives, for there exists an extensive range of native Syriac literature, as well as of translations into Syriac from Greek and other languages, dating from the second century up to the present day. What is commonly regarded as the best of this literature, however, was written in the 300-400 years prior to the advent of Islam, and with one or two exceptions it is the literature of this 'golden age' that has attracted the greatest attention among western scholars. It is worth looking at some of the areas which have claimed their particular interest.

(a) Biblical studies

The study of Syriac has long been seen as an important adjunct to biblical studies. The first printed edition of the Syriac New Testament goes back to 1555 (the earliest European Syriac grammar dates from 1539), and the standard Syriac version of both Old and New Testaments, known as the Peshitta, features in the great Paris and London polyglot

(* For an explanation of the confusing terminology see the appendix below, on the Syrian Churches.)

Bibles of the seventeenth century alongside the other ancient versions.

The Old Testament books were translated into Syriac directly from Hebrew, no doubt at different times and perhaps in different places. It is striking that Syriac tradition has no account of the origins of its biblical versions such as we have for the Septuagint in the Letter of Aristeas. Certain books, in particular those of the Pentateuch, have close links with the extant Aramaic Targumim, and it is now generally agreed that in these books there must be some sort of direct literary relationship between the Peshitta and Targumim, even though the exact nature of this relationship still remains very obscure. In the case of one book, Proverbs, the relationship is, remarkably enough, reversed, for the extant Targum of this book is evidently derived from the Peshitta, rather than vice versa.

Since the oldest Syriac translations of Old Testament books probably only go back to the period of the stabilization of the Hebrew text in the first century AD, the Peshitta Old Testament is of less interest than the Septuagint to textual critics of the Hebrew Bible, although it does nevertheless offer a number of interesting readings which feature in the apparatus of Biblia Hebraica and Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.

Besides the standard version of the Old Testament, the Peshitta, there is a further translation, this time made from Greek in Alexandria around AD 615. Known as the Syrohexapla and made by Paul of Tella, this is a very literal translation of Origen's revised Septuagint text in the Hexapla, together with his critical signs (asterisks and obeli) and many marginal readings derived from Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus. Not quite the whole of the Syrohexapla survives, but since very little of Origen's Hexapla remains in Greek the Syrohexapla is of prime importance for Septuagint studies.

It is interesting to see that in the history of translation into Syriac (whether of biblical or of non-biblical texts) there is a continuous move away from the free to the very literal, a process which reaches its climax in the seventh century.

There are several versions of the Syriac New Testament of which the oldest, dating from the second half of the second century AD, is probably Tatian's Diatessaron or harmony of the Four Gospels (he appears occasionally to have used some other sources as well). This work enjoyed wide popularity in the early Syriac church (it is not certain whether it was originally written in Greek or in Syriac), but was subsequently suppressed, with the result that no complete Syriac text of it survives: the nearest we have is Ephrem's Commentary on it. Although little is known of its original form, the influence of the Diatessaron was very widespread and we have medieval adaptations in Persian and Arabic, as well as in medieval German, Dutch, Italian and English.

The earliest Syriac Gospel text that survives is known as the Old Syriac, and is preserved in two very old manuscripts, the Curetonian (in the British Library) and the Sinaiticus (at the monastery of St Catharine on Mt Sinai). Textually it is of very great interest, exhibiting a number of 'Western' readings. Along with the Old Latin it is the oldest surviving translation of the Greek Gospels. It is likely that the Old Syriac once covered the whole Syriac New Testament Canon (which excludes Revelation, 2 Peter, 2-3 John and Jude), but only quotations from books other than the Gospels survive.

The standard New Testament version, the Peshitta, is a revision of the Old Syriac, completed probably in the early fifth century. The work of revision has sometimes been associated with the name of Rabbula, bishop of Edessa, but this is far from certain. The distribution of the revised text was evidently very effective for Peshitta manuscripts (of which several go back to the late fifth century) show remarkably little variation among themselves.

In the early sixth century the Peshitta was brought yet further into line with the Greek original under the auspices of the great Syrian Orthodox theologian, Philoxenus bishop of Mabbug, who had found certain passages in the Peshitta (notably Matt.1:1, 1:18; Heb.5:7 and 10:5) too free and susceptible of a 'Nestorian' interpretation. His version, known as the Philoxenian (although it was a certain chorepiscopus Polycarp who actually did the work) does not survive in its original form, but a century later it served as a basis for yet another revision, made by Thomas of Harkel in Alexandria, about 615. Thomas's work, known as the Harklean, survives in a number of manuscripts (some of the seventh and eighth centuries) and, along with Paul of Tella's contemporary Syrohexapla, represents the peak of sophistication in the technique of literal translation: every detail of the Greek original is reflected - which greatly eases the work of the modern textual critic who is interested in reconstructing the underlying Greek text!

An excellent survey of the Syriac New Testament versions is to be found in chapter 1 of B.M.Metzger's The Early Versions of the New Testament (Oxford, 1977), while for the Old Testament the best general discussion is that by C. van Puyvelde, the Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément VI (1960), 834 f.

(b) Patristic Studies

A very large number of the works of the Church Fathers was translated into Syriac, sometimes more than once. The earliest to survive are some of Eusebius' works, including the Theophania, lost in its Greek original; all these happen to be preserved in fifth century manuscripts. The process of translating Greek texts continued apace until the end of the seventh century, by which time the Arab invasions had effectively cut off the Syriac speaking churches from close contact with Greek culture.

Syriac translations of the Greek Church Fathers are of twofold interest. In the case of works where the Greek originals survive the Syriac translation not only usually antedates the earliest Greek manuscript by many centuries, but is itself preserved in manuscripts of great

antiquity (sixth century manuscripts are not uncommon). Even more important are the Syriac translations of works whose Greek originals are lost: besides Eusebius' *Theophania* these include treatises attributed to Hippolytus and Gregory Thaumaturgus, Athanasius' *Festal Letters*, Theodore of Mopsuestia's *Commentary on John*, Cyril of Alexandria's *Commentary on Luke*, and various works by Evagrius Ponticus. Syriac also preserves in translation the writings of several Greek anti-Chalcedonian theologians whose works, having been suppressed in their Greek form, would otherwise have been totally lost to us; most notable in this category are the voluminous works of Severus, patriarch of Antioch from 512 until 518.

(c) Liturgical Studies

For someone interested in the history of liturgy Syriac has great riches to offer. It was the general area of Syria-Palestine that proved the most creative and fertile in this field for early Christianity, and it was from here that the rich Byzantine liturgies of St John Chrysostom, St Basil and St James ultimately derived; here too, more than anywhere else, did liturgical poetry, in both Greek and Syriac, flourish. The East Syrian Liturgy of St Addai and St Mari happens to be the oldest liturgy still in regular use, while West Syrian tradition has produced an astonishing abundance of anaphoras: over 70 come down to us, and of these a dozen or so are still commonly employed.

Of particular importance to the student of comparative liturgy is the early Syrian baptismal rite, consisting of an anointing followed by immersion in water, a sequence evidently modelled on the Jewish initiation rite of circumcision and proselyte baptism. Only around AD 400 was a post-baptismal anointing introduced, thus bringing Antiochene liturgical practice into line with that of other areas.

The critical study of the contents of the many liturgical books in use in the various Syrian Churches is very much in its infancy. Here mention might be made of the useful bibliographical guide provided by A. Baumstark (one of the pioneers in the study of Syriac liturgy) in the appendix to his fascinating book, *Comparative Liturgy* (English translation: London, 1958), and by J.M.Sauget in his *Bibliographie des liturgies orientales* 1900-1960 (Rome, 1962).

(d) Early Syriac Christianity

So far we have only considered the interest of Syriac as an appendage to larger fields of study, but Syriac literature is also of value in its own right, and here we may select two particular aspects, early Syriac literature as the sole surviving representative of a genuinely Semitic Christianity, and religious poetry, the genre in which Syriac writers best excelled.

The earliest major authors whose names we know, Aphrahat and Ephrem, both of the fourth century, are virtually untouched by Greek culture and they offer us an essentially Semitic form of Christianity, quite different in many respects from the Christianity of the Greek and Latin speaking world of the Mediterranean littoral. From the fifth century onwards the

Syriac speaking churches underwent a rapid process of hellenization with the result that no subsequent writers entirely escape from the influence of Greek culture in some form or other, and so it is primarily to these two early writers, Aphrahat and Ephrem, that we must turn in order to examine this phenomenon. This specifically Semitic aspect of the earliest Syriac literature has been curiously neglected, despite its potential interest for the study of primitive Christianity as a whole, for which its relevance could be said to be much the same as that of Rabbinic literature for New Testament studies.

The fact that the earliest Syriac writers are virtually 'untainted' by Greek - and hence European - culture also makes this literature of particular interest to modern Asian and African churches which, quite apart from an understandable desire to be rid of Christianity's various European cultural trappings, find themselves more at home with Semitic than with Greek thought patterns.

An excellent and sympathetic introduction to this world of typology and symbolic theology will be found in R.Murray's *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (Cambridge, 1975).

(e) Syriac poetry

Syriac literature has produced (and indeed still continues to produce) a very large number of poets, but one in particular among them towers in stature as a poet of real originality and spiritual insight, Ephrem of Nisibis, who died in 373 at Edessa; his *madrashas*, or hymns, can justly take a place among the great religious poetry of the world - despite the derogatory judgement of one or two eminent Syriac scholars, like F.C.Burkitt. Ephrem's is an allusive lyrical poetry filled with paradox and wonder, and making highly imaginative use of typological exegesis. His intricate theory of symbolism has been described as an anticipation of the basic philosophical position of Paul Ricoeur. It is unfortunate that so little of his work is available in English translation*.

Syriac poetic form falls into two main categories, stanzaic and non-stanzaic verse; the former is known under the general title of *madrasha*, the latter under that of *memra*. *Madrashas* were certainly sung, and the titles of the melodies are preserved, but not the music itself. Each stanza was picked up by a refrain, and Ephrem (whose genuine writings show a great tenderness and concern for women) was noted for having had his refrains sung by female choirs. Each *madrasha* will be based on a particular stanza pattern built up on isosyllabic principles, where the basic units are groups of 4, 5, 6 or 7 syllables. Ephrem employs some fifty different stanza patterns, and these can range from the very simple (e.g. four lines of four syllables each) to the extremely complex.

* Numerous extracts can be found in R.Murray's *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (1975), and a selection of twelve poems, with a short introduction, is given in my *The Harp of the Spirit: Twelve poems of St Ephrem* (Studies supplementary to Sobornost 4, London, 1975). There is an important introduction to Ephrem's theory of symbolism by R.Murray in *Parole de l'Orient* 6/7 (1975/6).

The memra, or verse homily, was probably recited rather than sung, and consists of isosyllabic complets. In a particular memra the complets may consist of 5+5, 6+6, 7+7 or 12+12 syllables (in the 12+12 syllable pattern there is always a caesura after the fourth and eighth syllable). The 5+5 syllable pattern is traditionally associated with the name of Balai (5th century), the 7+7 with that of Ephrem, and the 12+12 with that of Jacob of Serugh (died 521).

Undoubtedly the best practitioner of the madrasa form was Ephrem, but there are some fine pieces by other later writers too, among which a small group of short poems by Simeon the Pterer (5th/6th century) deserves to be singled out. The memra form is already found in one of the earliest surviving examples of Syriac poetry, the gnosticizing 'Hymn of the Soul', preserved in the Acts of Thomas (6+6 syllables). In the case of Ephrem the demarcation between genuine and non-genuine is particularly hard to make in the case of the memre (7+7 syllables) that come down under his name. Notable later poets who made extensive use of the memra are the East Syrian Narsai, head of the famous theological school at Nisibis (5th century), the West Syrian Jacob of Serugh, and the three Isaacs (all of the 5th/6th century).

According to the fifth century church historian Sozomen, it was Harmonius, son of Bardaisan 'the philosopher of the Aramaeans', who, being 'deeply versed in Greek learning, was the first to subdue Syriac, his native tongue, to metres and laws'. Since Bardaisan died in 222, his son Harmonius (if he is not entirely fictional) would have been active in the early third century. An examination of the actual evidence, however, indicates that the implication that Syriac verse form was based on Greek metre is totally incorrect, for whereas classical Greek poetry was quantitative, Syriac poetry has always been syllabic. Evidently we are dealing with an example of Greek chauvinism, which preferred to see anything good in barbarian Syriac culture - such as Ephrem's poetry, some of it already translated into Greek by Sozomen's day - as ultimately derivative from Greek civilization. As a matter of fact it is more likely that there was influence the other way round, and that the Syriac madrasa provided the inspiration for the Byzantine isosyllabic hymn form known as the kontakion, developed in the fifth and sixth centuries; most of the best Greek hymnographers happen to come from Syria or Palestine, and the greatest exponent of the kontakion, Romanos, originated in bilingual Homs in Syria, where he could well have heard Ephrem's madrashe regularly sung in church. In any case it is known from explicit statements by Theodore of Mopsuestia (died 428) and others that Syriac religious poetry was translated into Greek for use among Greek-speaking congregations.

(f) Syriac as a bridge culture

Many people will be aware that a knowledge of Greek philosophy reached the medieval west by way of Arabic, travelling through Muslim Spain. What is not so widely realized is that Greek philosophy, medicine and science did not reach the Arab world direct, but normally by way of Syriac. Syriac translations of the works of Aristotle and others go back to the fifth century, but it was chiefly through the work of Syriac Christians working at Baghdad, the Abbasid capital, in the ninth century that this process of transmission actually took place. Among the most

famous of these translators was Hunain ibn Ishaq (died 873) who gave an interesting account of how he went about his work: having collected together the best and oldest Greek manuscripts he could find, he translated from Greek into Syriac, and only then from Syriac into Arabic. The reason for this at first sight rather cumbersome procedure was that Hunain had behind him half a millennium's accumulated experience of translating complicated Greek texts into Syriac, whereas for Arabic there existed no such tradition and so this meant that translation from Indo-European Greek into Semitic Arabic was most easily achieved by way of another Semitic language, Syriac. Thus it comes about that a knowledge of Syriac is essential as a background to the study of Aristotelian philosophy among the Arabs.

Thanks to the work of these translators both Arabic and Syriac preserve a number of Greek philosophical and medical works which would otherwise have been entirely lost, seeing that no Greek manuscripts of them survive. Among such works which come down to us only in Syriac are Nicholas of Damascus' compendium of Aristotelian philosophy, a dialogue on the soul between Socrates and Erastrophos, some sayings of a lady Pythagorean philosopher called Theano, and Galen's commentary on Hippocrates' Epidemiai (the last only partly known in Greek and Arabic) - to name but a selection.

It was, however, not only into Arabic that translations from Syriac were made: by the end of the first millennium AD both Greek writers in Syriac dress and native Syriac authors had found their way into languages as diverse as Armenian, Georgian, Sogdian, Middle Persian, Coptic, Ethiopic and Chinese. Nor was it unknown for Syriac texts to be translated into Greek: the influential Apocalypse of Methodius (late seventh century), for example, reached the medieval Latin west by way of a Greek translation from the Syriac original. Sometimes this traffic could even be two-way, as happened dramatically with some of the Aesop literature: the Greek life of Aesop, on the one hand, contains a section taken from the Story of Abiqar, an old Aramaic tale going back to the sixth or even seventh century BC; a collection of Aesopic fables, on the other hand, was translated into Syriac (and attributed to Josephus), only to find its way back into Greek at the end of the eleventh century masquerading under the name of Syntipas!

Because Syriac culture lay geographically between the Byzantine and Islamic worlds this has meant that the extensive Syriac chronicle tradition contains much that is of direct relevance to Byzantine and Islamic history, and there is a great deal of valuable source material lying there which still waits to be properly tapped.

III The Scope of Syriac Literature

Considered historically, Syriac literature can conveniently be divided up into three distinctive periods: (1) the golden age of Syriac literature, up to the seventh century; (2) the Arab period until about 1300; and (3) the period from about 1300 to the present day.

The first is the period which produced the most creative writers, and it is to this that we shall return shortly. The second period, which came to an end at about the time of the conversion of the Mongols to Islam, was essentially one of consolidation and compilation: as in the Byzantine world, this period saw the birth of an encyclopaedic type of literature, witnessing, right at its close, the appearance of the greatest of all Syriac polymaths, Gregory Abu'l Faraaj, better known as Barhebraeus (died 1286). Gregory wrote on every aspect of human knowledge of his time, and it is not for nothing that he has been compared to his western contemporary Thomas Aquinas (died 1274).

The opening of the third period was a bleak one for all Christian communities in the Middle East, but the lamp of Syriac learning and literature never died out entirely, and there has been a continuous stream of writers, up to the present day, who have employed classical Syriac as their main literary language. In the seventeenth century we also find the earliest flowering of Modern Syriac literature, in the form of poetry from the Alqosh school (north Iraq); it was only in the nineteenth century, however, with the establishment of a Syriac printing press at Urmia, that a written literature in Modern Syriac really got going. (Among the English works which the American mission at Urmia translated into Modern Syriac was Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*). In the present century the last decade or two have witnessed a renewed interest in this vernacular literature in both Iraq and Iran.

Syriac literature of the golden age (third to seventh centuries) emerges from anonymity with the appearance of two great writers in the fourth century: Aphrahat, the author of 23 'Demonstrations' covering a variety of religious topics, and often touching on Jewish-Christian relations, and Ephrem, whom we have already met, undoubtedly the finest of all Syriac poets. But besides being an outstanding poet, Ephrem also wrote a number of prose commentaries on certain books of the Bible, among which his commentaries on Genesis and Exodus show intriguing familiarity with Jewish exegesis. His prose refutations of Marcion, Bardaisan and Mani constitute an important (if frustrating) source of information on the teaching of these three 'heresiarchs'.

The fifth and sixth centuries witnessed a remarkable hellenization of much Syriac literature, both in style and in thought patterns, although poetry remained least touched by such influence. Among the several notable poets of this era (see II(c)), both Jacob of Serugh (as a pupil) and Narsai (as a teacher) were associated with the famous 'Persian School' at Edessa, which, after its closure by the emperor Zeno in 489, moved across the border to Nisibis, safe within the confines of the Persian Empire. The history of this important and influential school, which had Narsai as its director for the last decades of the fifth century, has now been well told in a monograph by Arthur Vööbus.

Since Syriac literature has largely been handed down in monasteries it is not surprising that much of it is specifically Christian in character. From the strictly theological literature two authors stand out for their originality of thought (and, in the case of the first, his style): Philoxenus of Mabbug (died 523) in the Syrian Orthodox tradition, and Babai (died 628) in that of the Church of the East. Characteristically both men also wrote treatises on the spiritual life, a topic on which there exist many very fine works in Syriac. Best known, but only one among many Syrian mystics, is Isaac of Nineveh (seventh century), whose writings were translated into Greek at the monastery of St Saba in Palestine in the ninth century: even today they are favourite reading among the monks of Mount Athos, while in Egypt their inspiration lies behind the contemporary monastic revival in the Coptic Church. What influence the Syrian mystics had on early Sufism is a question which still requires proper investigation.

Biblical exegesis is another prominent genre, with important representatives in both East and West Syrian tradition. Over the course of time commentaries on biblical books became more and more encyclopaedic and derivative in character, each writer drawing extensively from the work of his predecessors. Excellent representatives of the two theological traditions are the East Syrian Ishodad of Merv (ninth century) and the West Syrian Dionysius bar Salibi (died 1171), both of whom have left behind them commentaries on the entire Bible. Comparison of their two works and of their sources will show that, despite theological differences, there was a good deal of mutual interaction as far as the history of exegesis is concerned. A few biblical commentators show a remarkable critical insight, perhaps none more so than Jacob of Edessa; besides numerous penetrating 'scholia' on difficult biblical passages, there survives his commentary on the six days of creation (the *Hexaemeron*) which takes on in places more the form of a scientific treatise.

An ever popular genre - and one of considerable interest from the point of view of social history - is hagiography*. Some pieces of Syriac origin, such as the life of Alexis 'the Man of God', were soon translated into Greek and Latin, and so came to enjoy great vogue in the medieval west. A particularly fascinating collection of lives are those of the Persian martyrs, dating from the fourth to the seventh centuries, throughout which period the Church of the East suffered intermittent persecution from the Sasanid authorities, normally at the prompting of the Zoroastrian clergy.

Hagiography is often intimately connected with local monastic history. In the early Syriac life of Symeon the Stylite we can observe the tensions between this amazing athlete of the ascetic life and the monastic community to which he belonged. How such tensions came to be resolved in the course of time can be seen from the sixth century *Lives* of the Oriental Saints, by the Syrian Orthodox Church historian John of Ephesus. Among East Syrian writers, Thomas of Marga's *Book of Monastic Superiors* shows how vigorous - and varied - monastic life continued to be under early Arab rule.

* See the contribution by Susan Ashbrook below.

Insights into the daily life and problems of ecclesiastics in positions both high and low are provided by the correspondence of various bishops, including two East Syrian patriarchs, Ishoyab III in the seventh, and Timothy I in the late eighth/early ninth, century. From the latter we learn, for example, that in his day the best Syriac manuscripts containing works by Greek writers were to be found in the library of the Syrian Orthodox monastery of Mar Mattai (still functioning today in N. Iraq), and he describes how he has to resort to underhand tactics in order to have them copied.

But by no means all Syriac literature is religious in character. Of particular importance for the historian are the various chronicles, of which there is a long line culminating in those of Michael the Syrian and Barhebraeus, both valuable sources for the history of the Crusades. Among the earliest works of this sort is the delightfully naive 'Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite', a source from which (to use Peter Brown's words) "we can learn more about what it was like to live (and to starve) on the streets of an ancient city, than we can ever know about the Rome of Cicero".

Mention has already been made (above, II(f)) of Syriac philosophical and scientific literature. Although much of this was either translated from, or primarily based on, Greek works, the late Roman and early Arab period witnessed a number of scholars, such as Sergius of Reshaina (sixth century), Jacob of Edessa (seventh century), George bishop of the Arabs (eighth century) and Moshe bar Kepha (ninth century), who wrote with considerable learning and originality on secular as well as on religious topics. Commentaries on, and introductions to, Aristotle's logical works, constituting the Organon, take an important place among such writings. It is interesting to observe how little effect the Arab invasions had on Syriac culture of the seventh century; the many important scholars of this century also include among them a remarkable astronomer, Severus of Sebokht, only a few of whose writings have yet been published.

On a less exalted level there are works in Syriac on alchemy, the interpretation of dreams, astrology, and various forms of divination.

There also survives a certain amount of essentially popular literature in Syriac, such as the animal tales of Indian origin, Kalilah and Dimnah (better known under the name of Bidpai to seventeenth century European writers like La Fontaine); this work exists in Syriac in two separate translations, one made from Middle Persian in the sixth century, the other from Arabic in the ninth. Of native Syriac origin are the tensions, or contest poems, usually given a thin liturgical veneer (which has ensured their survival). This is actually a genre which goes back to ancient Mesopotamia, from where we have examples in both Akkadian and Sumerian; subsequently it was to be taken up by the Arabs (known as the *munāẓara*), and, perhaps by way of Spain, by medieval Spanish and Provençal jongleurs. In Syriac there are to be found precedence disputes between such figures as Death and Satan, Earth and Heaven, the Months of the Year, Wheat and Gold, the Vine and the Cedar etc.

Several important areas have been passed over in silence - the extensive apocryphal literature, and the canonical and legal texts, to name but a couple - but sufficient has by now been said to give some idea of the variety to be found within the confines of Syriac literature, and it is time to turn to look at the place of Syriac among the various Aramaic dialects, and then to survey some of the more important 'tools of the trade'.

IV The place of Syriac among the Aramaic dialects

Within the Semitic languages Aramaic belongs to the group of North West Semitic languages which comprises Eblaite, Amorite, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Hebrew and Moabite, besides Aramaic. By the end of the second millennium BC two distinctive sub-groups among the North West Semitic languages had emerged, Aramaic and Canaanite, the latter consisting of Phoenician, Hebrew and Moabite (some scholars would classify Ugaritic, too, as Canaanite).

The term 'Aramaic' in fact covers a multitude of different dialects, ranging in time from the early first millennium BC (isolated inscriptions) to the present day when various modern Aramaic dialects are still spoken in certain areas of Syria, Eastern Turkey, Iraq, Iran and the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. Of the several written dialects of Aramaic we have extensive literatures produced, mainly in the course of the first millennium AD, by three different religious groups in the Middle East, Jews, Christians and Mandeans; of these three, the Christian and Mandaean dialects of Aramaic developed their own distinctive script, and it is largely for that reason that these two dialects have come to be called by the separate names of 'Syriac' and 'Mandaean' (or 'Mandaic'). The various dialects of Jewish Aramaic, on the other hand, were written in that form of the old Aramaic script which was adopted by the Jews after the exile for writing Hebrew (and hence now known as 'square Hebrew', as opposed to the abandoned 'palaeo-Hebrew' script). To-day it is customary to use 'square Hebrew' in printing all dialects of Aramaic other than Syriac and Mandaean (although texts from both these dialects have occasionally also been printed in Hebrew script).

The correct classification of the Aramaic dialects still remains a matter of dispute among scholars, and the following division of the dialects into four chronological groups follows the general schema put forward by J.A.Fitzmyer:

- (1) Old Aramaic: this comprises the oldest surviving texts in Aramaic; all are inscriptions, and among them are the famous Sefire treaty texts. This period, when several different dialects are already discernible, is generally regarded as lasting from the tenth to the end of the eighth century BC (it should be remembered, of course, that the dividing lines between the different periods are inevitably somewhat arbitrary).
- (2) Official Aramaic: (sometimes also known as Imperial Aramaic, or Reichsaramäisch): under the late Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires Aramaic came to be used more and more as a chancery language (see J.B.Pritchard, The Ancient Near East in Pictures

(Princeton, 1954), figure 235, where one scribe is writing cuneiform Akkadian with a stylus, and the other Aramaic, using a pen) and as such was inherited by the Achaemenid empire. From this period we have both inscriptions on stone and, from Egypt, documents and letters on papyrus and leather deriving from three different archives, the most famous of which is the Jewish one from Elephantine. The Aramaic of the book of Ezra in its essentials belongs to this period.

(3) Middle Aramaic. The various texts that survive from the half millennium following Alexander's conquests in the Middle East (in other words, the Hellenistic and early Roman Empire, up to about AD 200) are to-day often lumped together as 'Middle Aramaic'; in fact the dialects represented are very disparate, for, on the one hand, there are archaizing literary texts like the Aramaic of Daniel and some of the fragmentary Qumran texts in Aramaic, while, on the other hand, there are the various local dialects, known mainly from inscriptions, which emerged around the turn of the Christian era at various points on the edge of the fertile crescent - Petra (Nabatean), Palmyra (Palmyrene), Hatra, and Edessa (the earliest pagan Syriac inscriptions belong to this period). From further afield, Armenia, Georgia and Afghanistan, come further inscriptions in what is often a very corrupt form of Aramaic.

(4) Late Aramaic. The period spanning the later Roman Empire and the beginnings of Arab rule (approximately AD 200-700) saw the emergence of a distinct division between Eastern and Western dialects of Aramaic. Western Aramaic includes Samaritan Aramaic, various Palestinian Jewish Aramaic dialects, and Christian Palestinian Aramaic (also known as Palestinian Syriac, since it employs the Syriac estrangelo script). Eastern Aramaic comprises Mandaeic, Babylonian Jewish Aramaic dialects, and Syriac (what emerged as the classical literary dialect of Syriac differs in some small details from the Syriac of the earlier pagan inscriptions from the Edessa area).

(5) Modern Aramaic. The Arab conquests effected the gradual elimination of Aramaic as a spoken language in most areas, and it is only in outlying mountainous regions that Aramaic has survived up to the present day, spoken by small groups of Christians, Jews and even a few Muslims. A Western Aramaic dialect survives only in three villages in the Anti-Lebanon (two Muslim, and one - Ma'tula - Christian), although the accounts of seventeenth and eighteenth century travellers indicate that it was much more widespread a few centuries ago. Eastern Aramaic dialects, however, enjoy a rather wider use: a Jewish dialect from North Iraq (Zakho) is still spoken by some immigrants to Israel from that area, while several somewhat differing Christian dialects are still in common use in the mountainous area formed to-day by East Turkey, North Iraq, North West Iran and Azerbaijan. In the area of South East Turkey known as Tur Abdin the local Syrian Orthodox Christians employ a dialect called Turoyo, the 'mountain' language, which is hardly ever written. In Iraq, Iran and Azerbaijan the Chaldeans and East Syrians speak a rather different dialect (or rather, group of dialects); this is sometimes also written, and the

earliest texts in Modern Syriac, all poetic ones, belong to the seventeenth century and come from the Alqosh area, but it was only in the nineteenth century, with the establishment of a printing press at Urmia (modern Rezaizeh) by the American Presbyterian mission, that a real impetus was given to the use of Modern Syriac for literary purposes. That the dialect spoken in Iraq (variously called Fellahi, Sourathi, or Swadaya) is still a force for politicians to take note of was shown by the action of the Iraqi government in 1972 when, in a decree of the 22nd April, it granted 'cultural rights to the Assyrian, Chaldean, and Syrian Orthodox citizens who speak Syriac'. How extensive a literature there now is in modern Syriac is indicated by R. Macuch's recent *Geschichte der spät- und neu-syrischen Literatur* (Berlin, 1976).

Syriac emerges as an independent Aramaic dialect in the early first century AD, and is first attested in a pagan inscription dated AD 6, from Birecik on the river Euphrates, some 45 miles west of Edessa (whose modern name, Urfa, is derived from the Syriac Urhay), the cultural centre of Syriac literature. To early writers Syriac is actually known as 'Edessene', an indication that it started out simply as the local Aramaic dialect of Edessa. That it came to be adopted as the literary language of Aramaic speaking Christians all over Mesopotamia may in part be due to the prestige enjoyed by Edessa as a result of its claim to possess a letter written by Jesus to its king (of Arab stock) named Abgar the Black (this was translated into Greek by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*, I.13).

It is a remarkable fact that written Syriac, in the form that had become fossilized by the fourth century, differs hardly at all in morphology from the written classical Syriac still employed today by Syrian Orthodox clergy and some others. Nevertheless, although the language remained the same, there emerged two different pronunciations of Syriac, usually known as the 'Eastern' and the 'Western'. The Eastern, which is essentially the more archaic, came to be used by members of the Church of the East, living mainly in what is now Iraq and Iran, while the Western is employed in the Maronite and the Syrian Orthodox tradition whose homeland is further west (modern Syria and SE Turkey). The most obvious difference between the two consists in the pronunciation of original *a*: the Eastern pronunciation preserves it (e.g. *malika* 'king'), while the Western alters it to *o* (*malko*).

Syriac scripts

The earliest Syriac inscriptions of the first and second centuries AD (all pagan) employ a script with many similarities with Palmyrene cursive writing, but by the time of our earliest manuscripts (early fifth century AD) this script has taken on a more formalized character, known as 'Estrangelo' (from Greek *strongulos* 'rounded'). The British Library preserves many superb pieces of calligraphy in this hand. Although the script continued to be used well into the Middle Ages (and indeed enjoyed a dramatic local revival in Tur Abdin in the twelfth century), during the course of the eighth century there emerged, side by side with it, a new and more compact script developed from estrangelo. The correct name for this

new script is *serto* (literally 'a scratch, character'), but in European works it is often designated 'Jacobite', since it became the normal script employed by the 'Jacobites' (i.e. Syrian Orthodox); it is in fact also used by the Maronites as well. A few centuries later, among the East Syrians, we see the gradual emergence from *estrangelo* of the other distinctive Syriac script, today employed by Chaldeans and 'Assyrians'; it is generally called the 'Nestorian' or 'Chaldean' script by European writers.

The study of Syriac palaeography is still in its infancy, and the dating of manuscripts on the basis of the hand alone can be a matter of great uncertainty. The only guidance available is the excellent photography in W.H.P.Hatch's An Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts (Boston, 1946).

The early centuries of Arab rule witnessed the emergence of various vocalization systems to assist the reading and pronunciation of the unvowelled Arabic, Hebrew and Syriac scripts. For Syriac we know that one of the early experimenters in this field was the great Syrian Orthodox scholar Jacob of Edessa (died 708), fragments of whose grammar, setting out his suggestions, survive. What finally emerged were two different systems, one used by Syrian Orthodox and Maronites (the so-called Jacobite vowel signs), and the other employed by East Syrians (the so-called Nestorian vowel signs); the former consist of symbols derived from Greek letters, the latter of different combinations of dots. In practice to-day West Syrian scribes (using *Serto*) rarely bother to insert the vowel signs, while East Syrian ones quite frequently give them.

Many Syriac scribes, right up to the present day (as we shall see, manuscripts still continue to be copied), have been very fine calligraphers. A few have also been illuminators, and by far the most famous illustrated Syriac manuscript is the so-called 'Rabbula Gospels' in the Laurentian Library, Florence. According to the long colophon the scribe Rabbula completed this magnificent work on the sixth of February 'in the year 897 of Alexander', that is AD 586, at the Monastery of St John of Beth Zagba, probably somewhere in North Syria. But this is by no means the only illuminated Syriac manuscript to survive, as can be readily seen by anyone who consults Jules Leroy's Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures (two volumes, one of text, one of plates; Paris, 1964).

V Tools

(a) Grammars

These are best divided into two categories, elementary and reference grammars:

Elementary grammars

Until the appearance of John Healey's First Studies in Syriac accompanying the present volume, the standard work in English for beginners was T.H.Robinson's Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar

(Oxford, 4th ed. 1968), which is provided with exercises (Syriac-English, English-Syriac) and a two-way glossary. For a number of different reasons Robinson's Grammar was not a very satisfactory work, even in the somewhat improved later editions. In Latin a much more useful introductory work is L.Palacios, Grammatica Syriaca (Rome, 1954), which also contains exercises, as well as a short selection of texts in *serto* script. For those who read German A.Ungnad's Syrische Grammatik (Munich, 1913) is particularly well set out for beginners.

It is often helpful to start on reading simple vocalized texts at an early stage: for such purposes the grammatical analysis of the Peshitta Gospels in H.F.Whish's Clavis Syriaca (London, 1883) will be especially helpful to those learning the language on their own. Much shorter, but similarly conceived, and with a brief introductory grammatical sketch, are the Syriac Reading Lessons, by 'The Author of The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon etc. etc.', in other words B.Davidson (London, 1851).

From the Middle East there come a number of elementary books designed for teaching Syriac to schoolchildren. One that makes use of English as well as Arabic explanations is Asmar El-Khoury's Companion (Beirut, 1972).

Reference grammars

Of intermediary sized grammars there are German ones by E.Nestle (with an English translation, Berlin, 1889) and by C.Brockelmann (Leipzig, 1899 and many subsequent editions); the latter in particular is very handy. Both these works also contain a selection of texts and a glossary. Of comparable size and coverage in French (but without any texts) is L.Costaz' Grammaire syriaque (Beirut, 2nd ed. 1964), where there is a useful typographical distinction between material meant for the less advanced and that reserved for the more experienced student.

The standard reference grammars are those by R.Duval, Grammaire syriaque (Paris, 1881) and (above all) T.Nöldeke, Kurzfassste syrische Grammatik (Leipzig, 2nd ed. 1898; English translation by J.A.Crichton, (London, 1904)). The German reprint of 1966 contains some supplements and an index of passages quoted. Although both these works pay generous attention to syntax, there is actually a great need for a specifically diachronic study of Syriac syntax.

Of the older reference grammars, that by A.Merx, Grammatica Syriaca (Halle, 1867), in Latin, might be singled out. An intriguing glimpse into the earliest European grammars, produced during the Renaissance, is provided by the facsimiles in W.Strothmann's Die Anfänge der syrischen Studien in Europa (Göttingen, 1971).

It should not be forgotten that there are numerous grammars by native Syriac scholars, going back to Jacob of Edessa in the seventh century. The thirteenth century polymath, Barhebraeus, even wrote a verse grammar, as well as one in prose. Of the more recent grammars published in the Middle East mention should be made of the Arabic one by C.J.David (Mosul, 1879; 2nd ed. 1896), the learned Syrian Catholic metropolitan of Damascus and editor of the Mosul edition of the Peshitta (1887-91), and of the French Clef de la langue araméenne (Mosul, 1905) by Alphonse Mingana, later of Birmingham fame.

(b) Anthologies of texts (chrestomathies)

The chrestomathy at the end of Brockelmann's Syrische Grammatik offers a particularly good selection of texts (there is a slight difference in choice of texts between the earlier and later editions), with samples in all three scripts, both vocalized and unvocalized. One of the pieces included is part of the Teaching of Addai, the Syriac account of the legend concerning king Abgar's correspondence with Jesus. Brockelmann's work contains a useful glossary, of which an English edition, with added etymological notes, has been published separately by M.Goshen Gottstein under the title A Syriac Glossary (Wiesbaden, 1970).

R.Kübert's Textus et Paradigmata Syriaca (Rome, 1952) contains some twenty pages of paradigms followed by an interesting selection of texts, both biblical and non-biblical, in a handwritten serto. A glossary to this is provided in his Vocabularium Syriacum (Rome, 1956), to which there is a supplement in Orientalia 39 (1970), pp. 315-9.

A very good variety of texts, in vocalized serto script, is to be found in L.Costaz and P.Mouterde's Anthologie syriaque (Beirut, 1955). There are brief introductory notes on the authors represented.

Most of the older grammars contain chrestomathies at the end, and sometimes these will include texts not published elsewhere (e.g. the Syriac version of the Lives of the Prophets will be found in Nestle's grammar). There are also several nineteenth century chrestomathies without grammars attached, and again many of these contain unpublished texts; of these the most important are by A.Rüdiger (Halle/Leipzig, 3rd ed. 1892) and P.Zingerle (Rome, 1871-3).

From the Middle East there is a good graded series of reading books (serto) published in Qamishli (in eastern Syria; a modern town facing ancient Nisibis, now Nusaybin across the border in Turkey): A.N.Karabash, Herge d-qeryana, 'Reading Exercises', in eight volumes (vol.8, 1972). These contain several texts by contemporary Syriac authors.

Two older anthologies printed in the Middle East are of importance since they include some texts not yet printed elsewhere.

These are the Kthabuna d-parthuthe, or 'Little book of scraps', published by the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission at Urmia in 1898, and J.E.Manna's Morceaux choisis de littérature araméenne (2 volumes; Mosul, 1901; reprinted Baghdad, 1977). Both these employ the East Syrian script.

(c) Dictionaries

Besides the glossaries attached to the various grammars and chrestomathies already mentioned, the beginner will also find W.Jenning's A Lexicon to the Syriac New Testament (Oxford, 1926) particularly useful, seeing that one of the most readily available vocalized Syriac texts is the British and Foreign Bible Society's edition of the Peshitta New Testament.

Of the dictionaries proper the two most easy to handle are Jessie Payne Smith (Mrs Margoliouth), Compendious Syriac Dictionary (Oxford, 1903 and many reprints), arranged alphabetically and very good for idioms, and L. Costaz, Dictionnaire syriaque-français (Beirut, 1963), arranged by root, and including English and Arabic equivalents as well as French. Both these will prove adequate for most practical purposes, but neither gives any references to sources; for these the two monuments of Syriac lexicography must be consulted, (Jessie's father) R. Payne Smith's Thesaurus, and C.Brockelmann's Lexicon.

Brockelmann's Lexicon Syriacum (Berlin, 1895; much expanded second edition 1928) is the more convenient size to handle, and it is in a single volume. Arrangement is by root and the language employed is Latin (at the end there is a useful reverse Latin-Syriac index; the second edition simply gives the page reference for the Syriac equivalent, but the first edition more conveniently provides the Syriac word itself). Lists of references, especially for rarer words, are very helpful, but quotations are never given, for reasons of space.

Robert Payne Smith's Thesaurus Syriacus in two folio volumes (Oxford, 1879, 1901) must be one of the most splendid of the many dictionaries the Oxford University Press has put out: the beautiful headings and layout, with ample margins for annotation, are matched by the wealth of examples quoted. The work (which, like all dictionaries, draws on the fruits of many earlier dictionaries) employs Latin rather than English, and is arranged by root.

A Supplement to the Thesaurus of R. Payne Smith (Oxford, 1927) was compiled subsequently by his daughter Jessie, in order to include those texts which had been published for the first time only in the intervening years. Some further additions, mainly taken from medical texts, will be found in Orientalia 8 (1939), pp. 25-28.

Both Brockelmann and Payne Smith make good use of the tenth century Syriac lexicographers, Bar Bahlul (edited by R. Duval, 1888-91) and Bar Ali (Part I edited by G. Hoffmann, 1874; part II by R. J. H. Gottheil, 1908). The more advanced student will find that these two works are sometimes worth consulting in their own right.

Of the older European dictionaries, E. Castell's Lexicon Heptaglotton (London, 1669 and reprints), based on Walton's Polyglot, and C. Schaaf, Lexicon Syriacum Concordantiale (Leiden, 2nd ed. 1717) still have their uses. Schaaf covers only the New Testament, but effectively acts as a concordance to this.

There are also some Syriac dictionaries published in the Middle East; of these the following deserve particular mention since they sometimes include words absent from the European dictionaries: G. Cardahi, Al-Lobab, sive Dictionarium Syro-Arabicum (2 volumes; Beirut, 1887-91); T. Audo, Dictionnaire de la langue chaldéenne (Syriac-Syriac, in 2 volumes; Mosul, 1897); and J. E. Manna, Vocabulaire chaldéen-arabe (Mosul, 1900). The Syriac Academy in Baghdad is making preliminary plans for compiling a new dictionary.

A large number of important Syriac texts have been published since all these dictionaries were compiled and, since these include quite a number of words not yet recorded in any of them, there is certainly room for at least another supplement to the Thesaurus!

(d) Main Editions of the Syriac Bible

The beginner will find the British and Foreign Bible Society's edition of the Peshitta New Testament very useful for reading practice: it is very clearly printed and is fully vocalized (serto with West Syrian vowel signs). At first the Gospels were also printed separately. This edition also has the advantage that it contains a reliable text, and for the Gospels it is based on the critical edition by Pusey and Gwynn (1901); the latter has a facing Latin translation and gives the variant readings (usually of a very minor character) from a number of early manuscripts. Since the original Syriac New Testament Canon did not contain 2 Peter, 2-3 John, Jude or Revelation, there is no Peshitta translation of these books available; as a result the Bible Society prints a later translation, probably belonging to the sixth century, for these particular books.

A good way to familiarize oneself with reading unvocalized texts is to read the Old Syriac Gospels alongside the Peshitta. The most convenient edition is that by F. C. Burkitt, Evangelion da-Mepharreshe (Cambridge, 1904), based on the Curetonian manuscript (with variations of the Sinaiticus at the bottom of the page in the apparatus); this has a facing English translation and for the Syriac the estrangelo script is used (the smaller sized type in the notes is actually based on Burkitt's own beautiful Syriac handwriting). After reading only a

few verses it will be seen that this is a much freer translation of the Greek than is the Peshitta; the latter actually came into existence as a revision of the Old Syriac. For those interested in textual criticism of the New Testament it is important to use A. Lewis' edition of the Sinaiticus in conjunction with Burkitt.

The surviving fragments of the Diatessaron in Syriac were collected by I. Ortiz de Urbina, Vetus Evangelium Syrorum; Diatessaron Tatiani, as volume VI of the Madrid Polyglot (1967).

The very literal seventh century translation known as the Harklean (in fact a revision of earlier revisions) was published in two volumes by J. White under the misleading title of Versio Syriaca Philoxeniana (1778-1803). A Latin translation is provided.

There are several English translations of the Peshitta New Testament, or parts of it: by J. Murdock (1851), W. Norton (1890), and G. M. Lamsa (1933).

In the absence of a printed concordance, Schaaf's New Testament lexicon (listed under V(c) Dictionaries) is still useful. There exists a handwritten concordance, made by A. Bonus, which is now in the possession of the Department of Middle Eastern Studies, Melbourne.

For the Peshitta Old Testament there are convenient and good editions of the Pentateuch (estrangelo) and Psalms (serto) published by the British and Foreign Bible Society. At the present time there is a large-scale new edition of the Peshitta Old Testament in the course of publication, under the general editorship of Professor P. A. H. de Boer (Leiden). So far the following volumes have appeared:

- Sample edition: Song of Songs, Tobit, IV Ezra (1966)
- I.1: Genesis, Exodus (1977)
- II.2: Judges, Samuel (1978)
- II.4: Kings (1976)
- IV.3: Apocalypse of Baruch, IV Ezra (1973)
- IV.6: Odes, Psalms of Solomon, Apocryphal Psalms, Tobit, I(III) Ezra (1972).

These are beautifully printed in estrangelo script; the edition makes use of all known early manuscripts as well as of many later ones.

There are also reliable earlier editions of several individual books: Psalms (W. Barnes, 1904); Lamentations (B. Albrektson, 1963); Wisdom of Solomon (J. A. Emerton, 1959); and the Apocrypha (P. de Lagarde, 1861).

There exist several old editions containing the entire Peshitta Old Testament, but none of these is based on the oldest or best manuscripts available. The edition of S. Lee (London, 1823), using serbo script, can sometimes be picked up second-hand; it is largely based on Brian Walton's London Polyglot Bible (1657), which in turn goes back to the Paris Polyglot of 1645. The manuscripts employed for these editions were mostly of very late West Syrian provenance, though Lee made some use of the twelfth century 'Buchanan Bible', which had been brought back from India by the Reverend Claude Buchanan and presented to the University Library, Cambridge, around 1809.

The American Presbyterian Mission printed an edition at Urmia in 1852 containing the entire Peshitta Old Testament; for this, local East Syrian manuscripts were used as the basis, and the script employed is also East Syrian. A revision of this, made by Joseph de Kelayta, was published by the Trinitarian Bible Society in 1913 (printed in rather diminutive East Syrian characters).

A second Middle Eastern edition, prepared by the Syrian Catholic bishop C.J. David, was published by the Dominican press at Mosul, 1887-92; for this East Syrian script (vocalized) was employed. This edition was reprinted at Beirut in 1951 and is still available.

Mention should also be made of the magnificent photolithographic reproduction of the seventh century manuscript of the Peshitta in the possession of the Ambrosian Library in Milan; for this A.M. Ceriani was responsible (1876-9).

Since there is generally very little variation between Peshitta manuscripts (at least compared with Septuagint ones), for most purposes it will make little difference which edition of the Peshitta Old Testament is used. For serious work on the Hebrew text underlying the Peshitta, however, it is essential to use an edition (above all the Leiden one where ready) based on the earliest manuscripts, since the text of the Peshitta evidently underwent some small but important modifications during its early history.

For the Syrohexapla A.M. Ceriani produced a photolithographic edition (1874) of a ninth century manuscript in the Ambrosian Library, containing the second half of the Old Testament (Job - Malachi). The companion volume to this manuscript was still in existence in the sixteenth century and was used by various Renaissance scholars; subsequently, however, it disappeared in circumstances still unknown. Other scattered Syrohexapla texts containing books from the first half of the Old Testament were collected together and edited by P. de Lagarde (Bibliotheca Syriaca, Göttingen, 1892); an earlier edition of this (1880) employed Hebrew type). Some subsequent finds were published by W. Baars in *New Syrohexaplaric Texts* (Leiden, 1968, with a valuable introduction), while a photographic edition of a Pentateuch manuscript from

SE Turkey has been edited by A. Vøllebus (Louvain, 1975).

There are concordances to the following books of the Peshitta Old Testament: Palms (N. Sprenger; Wiesbaden, 1976), Ecclesiastes (W. Strohmann; Göttingen, 1973), and Ecclesiasticals (M.M. Winter; Leiden, 1976). An invaluable list of Old Testament Peshitta Manuscripts was published by the Peshitta Institute (Leiden) in 1961.

By way of appendix a word should be said of the Christian Palestinian Aramaic (or Palestinian Syriac) version of the Bible, made from Greek. As has already been seen, this is a Western Aramaic dialect quite separate from Syriac, even though it uses an estrangelo script. Only fragments of the version survive, often as the underwriting of palimpsest manuscripts. The Old Testament fragments are at present being re-edited by M. Goshen-Gottstein and assistants, and one volume of The Bible in the Palestinian Syriac Version (Pentateuch and Prophets) has so far been published (Jerusalem, 1973). For the New Testament the most extensive texts are in A. Lewis and M. Gibson, The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels (London, 1899). A list, now incomplete, of other New Testament texts will be found in F. Schlutess, Lexicon Syro-palaestinum (Berlin, 1903).

For guidance to the secondary literature on the Syriac biblical versions, see the works mentioned at the end of II(a).

(c) Histories of Syriac Literature

There is unfortunately no satisfactory up to date introduction to Syriac literature and the beginner has to make the most of what is available. Perhaps still the best, and certainly the most readable, is R. Duval's La littérature syriaque (Paris, 3rd ed. 1907), which treats the subject by genre. The standard English work, W. Wright's A Short History of Syriac Literature (London, 1894) is useful, but out-dated and very dry; de Lacy O'Leary's The Syriac Fathers (London, 1909) is not much better in this respect. A. Baumstark's section on Syriac literature in his Die christliche Literaturen des Osten I (Leipzig, 1911) is good for its date, and J.B. Chabot's Littérature syriaque (Paris, 1934) is also quite reasonable.

The only recent work is I. Ortiz de Urbina's Patrologia Syriaca (Rome, 2nd ed. 1965), in Latin. This is more a tool for reference, being a catalogue of the main writers and their works; its bibliographies, attached to each section, will be found very useful. A further edition is in preparation. There is also a brief German survey by A. Baumstark and A. Ricker in Handbuch der Orientalistik III: Semitistik (Leiden, 1954), pp. 169-204.

The standard reference work, however, is A. Baumstark's great Geschichte der syrischen Literatur (Bonn, 1922; reprinted Berlin 1968), and this still remains indispensable for the serious student of Syriac literature. Unfortunately Baumstark's German style is notoriously difficult and this is hardly a work to be read from cover to cover. Besides editions, Baumstark notes all manuscripts of each individual work in so far as they were known to him (of the catalogues of major collections of Syriac manuscripts in European libraries only Mingana's Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts (Birmingham) has appeared subsequently).

Another, much older, reference work which is still of great value to the specialist is J.S. Assemani's Bibliotheca Orientalis, in three large volumes (Rome, 1719-28), where a volume each is devoted to 'Orthodox', 'Monophysite' and 'Nestorian' writers. Generous excerpts from manuscripts in the Vatican library are given throughout. At the beginning of volume III is printed the important medieval catalogue of Syriac authors and their writings, compiled by Abdisho, the East Syrian metropolitan of Nisibis who died in 1318.

Thanks to recent manuscript finds (especially by Professor Arthur Vööbus in the Middle East) and the publication of important new texts there is now a great need for an updated large-scale history of Syriac literature. Such a volume has indeed been promised by Vööbus himself (announced at the first 'Symposium Syriacum', held in Rome 1965).

Almost all the above histories of Syriac literature give the impression that Syriac literature died out after the Mongol invasions. Only Baumstark gives a few subsequent writers. This impression is actually a totally false one, for classical Syriac has continued to be an important literary language right up to the present day. The extent of this more recent literature was almost totally unknown to European scholars until the publication of R. Macuch's Geschichte der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur (Berlin, 1976), which covers both literature in classical Syriac and that in Modern Syriac (first written down in the seventeenth century). (For some addenda and corrections see the review in the Journal of Semitic Studies 23 (1978), pp. 129-38).

Finally three important histories of Syriac literature published in the Middle East should be mentioned. The late Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Ephrem Barsaüm published a history of Syriac literature in Arabic in 1943 under the title The Book of Unstrung Pearls in the History of Syriac Literature and Sciences. An enlarged second edition appeared in 1956, and of this a Syriac translation was made by the late metropolitan of Mardin (SE Turkey), Mar Iuhannon Philoxenos Dolobani, himself a considerable Syriac scholar; this was published at Qamishli (Syria) in 1967. A partial English translation, by M.I. Moosa, was made for an American doctoral dissertation in 1965 (University Microfilms no 66-6949). Barsaüm's work has information on several authors not included in Baumstark, but it excludes all writers belonging to the Church of the East.

Albert Abuna's Adab al-lugha al-aramiyya ('Aramean literature'; Beirut, 1970), also in Arabic, is a good general history of Syriac literature. Until recently the author taught in the seminary at Mosul.

P. Sarmas's Tash'ita d-siprayuta atoreta (History of Assyrian, i.e. Syriac literature; Teheran, 1969-70) is in modern Syriac and covers East Syrian writers. Dr Sarmas, who died in 1972, was one of the foremost authorities on Syriac in Iran.

All these three works have been well exploited by Macuch in his book mentioned above.

For those interested in seeing what Syriac scholars, both western and Middle Eastern, actually look like, the collection of photographs in Abrohom Nouro's My Tour in the Parishes of the Syrian Church in Syria and Lebanon (Beirut, 1967) is to be recommended. The author, whose family comes from Edessa, is a real enthusiast for the Syriac language and one whose energy and dynamism know no bounds; both he and his immediate relations speak Classical Syriac at home. *

(f) The Historical Background

Since Syriac literature spans a wide area both in time and in space there is no single work that covers the historical background. For the home of Syriac, Edessa, an eminently readable work is J.B. Segal's Edessa, the Blessed City (Oxford, 1971); the author is an authority on the early pagan inscriptions and mosaics from the area, and he has explored some fascinating byways of local literary history in the course of writing this book.

For the early history of the Church of the East as it existed under the Sasanid empire (roughly modern Iraq and Iran) there are two English works: W.A. Wigram, An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church, 100-640 A.D. (London, 1910), and W.G. Young, Patriarch, Shah and Prophet (Rawalpindi, 1974). Wigram was a member of the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission to the Church of the East and he did a great deal to bring knowledge of that Church's plight to the English-reading public. For the period of the origins of Christianity in Mesopotamia (where legends abound) neither of these two works is sufficiently critical, and a more reliable account will be found in J.M. Fiey's Jalons pour une histoire de l'église en Iraq (Louvain, 1970), which covers up to the seventh century. A more detailed history spanning the same period is J. Labourt's Le christianisme dans l'empire perse

* I first had the pleasure of meeting Malfono (= Teacher) Abrohom Nouro early one morning at the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate in Charfet (Lebanon) where I was staying the night: having heard rumours that a European mestaryono ('syriacisant') was at large, he had taken a taxi out from Beirut at once and turned up only shortly after dawn.

(Paris, 1904), a solid work which still retains its value. For this Church's flourishing history under the early Abbasid caliphs, besides Young's book, there is a recent work by H. Putman, L'Eglise et l'Islam sous Timothée I (780-823) (Beirut, 1975). The Mongol period (13th-14th century) is well covered in the short book by J.M. Fiey, Chrétiens syriaques sous les Mongols (Louvain, 1975). The best overall survey of the history of the Church of the East is by the late Cardinal E. Tisserant, in the article 'Nestorienne, église' in the Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique.

The period of the emergence of the Syrian Orthodox Church as a separate entity, in the 5th-6th century, is covered by W.H.C. Frend's The Rise of the Monophysite Movement (Cambridge, 1972) and W.A. Wigram's The Separation of the Monophysites (London, 1923); the latter is especially valuable for the sixth century, being based on little exploited Syriac sources. For the Arab period the only works available are in German: W. Hage, Die syrisch-jakobitische Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit (Wiesbaden, 1966), and P. Kawerau, Die jakobitische Kirche im Zeitalter der syrischen Renaissance (Berlin, 2nd ed. 1960); the latter deals with the 12th-13th century.

Two authors in particular have made great contributions to the historical geography of the Syrian churches, E. Honigsmann, covering the Mediterranean littoral in his Evêques et Evêchés monophysites d'Asie Antérieure au VI^e siècle (Louvain, 1951) and his Le Couvent de Barsauma et le Patriarcat jacobite d'Antioche et de Syrie (Louvain, 1954); and J.M. Fiey, covering an area further east (roughly modern Iraq) in his Assyrie chrétienne (3 volumes, Beirut, 1965-8) and his Nisibe (Louvain, 1977).

Of interest too for Syriac Christianity is J. Spencer Trimingham's Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times (London, 1979).

(g) Bibliographical Aids

For individual authors the handiest source of information on secondary literature is Ortiz de Urbina's Patrologia Syriaca (2nd ed. 1965). Apart from this, C. Moss's Catalogue of Syriac Printed Books and Related Literature in the British Museum (London, 1962) provides the nearest thing available to a bibliography of Syriac topics; the work covers up to about 1959. A supplementary bibliography (but arranged differently), covering 1960-1970, will be found in my 'Syriac Studies 1960-1970: a Classified Bibliography', Parole de l'Orient 4 (1973), pp. 393-465; a second supplement, to cover 1971-1980, is in preparation.

The bibliography in Nestle's Syriac Grammar is still useful for its listing of early printed editions of Syriac texts.

A great deal of information, in succinct form, will be found in J. Assfalg - P. Krüger, Kleines Wörterbuch des christlichen Orients (Wiesbaden, 1975), where the entries are provided with bibliographies.

(h) Series of Texts and Periodicals

Pride of place is taken here by the series Scriptores Syri in the Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (Corpus of oriental Christian writers), published at Louvain since 1903; by the end of 1978 a total of 174 volumes in the Syriac series had been published (nos. 173-4 were texts edited by the indefatigable general editor of the series, Professor R. Draguet, now in his 80's). The normal format is a separate volume each for text (estrangelo script) and translation (Latin, German, French or English).

A large number of Syriac texts have also been published in the Patrologia Orientalis, founded by R. Graffin and now edited by his nephew F. Graffin. By the end of 1978 a total of 39 volumes (each containing several fascicules) had appeared. In this series the translation (now normally French) either faces the text, or (in older volumes) is placed under it.

R. Graffin also started another series, Patrologia Syriaca, of which, however, only three volumes ever appeared (not to be confused with Ortiz de Urbina's history of Syriac literature under the same title).

Although not in a series, the large number of Syriac writers edited by Lazarist Father Paul Bedjan (1838-1920) should not be left without mention. Between 1888 and 1910 he published over fifteen volumes (often running to well over 500 pages each) of Syriac texts which were printed (by W. Drugulin of Leipzig) in a beautiful East Syrian script. An appreciation of Bedjan's notable contribution to Syriac studies was given by J.M. Vosté in Orientalia Christiana Periodica II (1945), pp. 45-102.

A series recently started is Göttinger Orientforschungen, Reihe Syriaca (some 16 volumes by 1978), reproduced from typescript: for the Syriac texts a typewriter with estrangelo script, developed in Holland, is employed. (This is one of the three Syriac typewriters faces that seem to be in existence; another, designed some time ago in Germany, is based on the modern East Syrian script, and was employed to type the Modern Syriac texts in a recent collection of these by R. Macuch and E. Panoussi).

Syriac studies have rarely had a periodical devoted solely to themselves, and the following are the chief periodicals where Syriac texts and articles of Syriac interest are frequently published (the list is alphabetical):

- Analecta Bollandiana: this specializes in hagiographical texts (in any language) and it is published by the venerable and learned Society of Bollandists in Brussels.
- Journal/Bulletin of the Syriac Academy, Baghdad: the Syriac Academy was established in Baghdad shortly after the Iraqi Government had proclaimed Syriac to be a recognized cultural language of the country (decree of 22 April, 1972). Although most articles are in Arabic (with English summaries), each number has a short English section with contributions by western scholars. Volumes 2 and 3 contain particularly important collections of Syriac inscriptions in Iraq (P.Haddad).
- Le Muséon: many numbers contain publications of shorter Syriac texts. There are now two indices covering all the numbers from its inception (1882) up to 1931, and thence to 1973.
- Oriens Christianus: this august periodical has been published since 1901 and for a long time it was edited by A.Baumstark.
- Orientalia Christiana Periodica: published by the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. There is a separate series of monographs under the title Orientalia Christiana Analecta (of which numbers 197 and 205 contain the papers given at the Symposia Syriaca of 1972 and 1976).
- Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica: published since 1970 by the Flemish speaking Department of Oriental Studies at Leuven (Louvain); articles are in English, French and German.
- L'Orient Syrien: this was edited from 1956 until 1967, shortly before his death, by Mgr Gabriel Khouri-Sarkis, Syrian Catholic Chorpiscopos living in Paris. The articles (all in French) are generally excellent examples of 'haute vulgarisation', and include many translations of Syriac texts. There is an index in the Mémorial Mgr G.Khouri-Sarkis (Louvain, 1969).
- Parole de l'Orient: published by the Maronite Université Saint Esprit at Kaslik in the Lebanon; articles are usually in French and the majority deal with Syriac topics. The first number of Parole de l'Orient (or, to use its Syriac title, Melto d-Madnho) appeared in 1970 as a successor to Melto: Recherches orientales, which ran between 1965 and 1969 (index in Parole de l'Orient 1).
- Revue de l'Orient Chrétien: this valuable periodical, edited by R.Graffin, ran from 1896 to 1946; there are indices at the end of every ten volumes.

VI Epilogue: the delights of manuscripts

To read, as one sits in the Oriental Studies Room of the British Library, the words "this volume was completed in the month Teshri II of the year 723 in Urhay, capital of Beth Nahrin" is a moving experience, for at the end of this, the earliest of all dated Syriac

manuscripts (411 of the Christian era), is also a list of names of Persian martyrs, almost certainly brought back from Seleucia-Ktesiphon only a few months previously by Marutha, bishop of Martyropolis, who had been serving as ambassador to the Sasanid court. It does not take much imagination to find oneself transported back across time and space to Edessa in November 411.

As a matter of fact the first Syriac manuscript I ever had the joy of handling was a rather scruffy and torn fragment on an undergraduate visit to Beirut; although it was no more than a couple of hundred years old at the most, my curiosity was aroused by the mention of the fifth century emperor Marcian. On return home I managed to identify the text as a fragment of the life of the fierce monk Barsoma who successfully scared off his theological opponents at the second council of Ephesus in 449. The excitement caused me by this very minor discovery proved addictive, but fortunately for one's pocket one does not necessarily have to go to the Middle East to browse among Syriac manuscripts; London and Birmingham happen to possess two of the largest collections of Syriac manuscripts in the world. The bulk of those in the British Library are exceptionally old, some belonging to the fifth and sixth centuries - thanks to their having been preserved until the mid-nineteenth century in a Syrian monastery in the Nitrian desert, between Alexandria and Cairo. The manuscripts in the Mingana Collection of the Selly Oak Colleges Library, Birmingham, on the other hand, are mostly very recent (one was copied as late as 1932), but nevertheless contain several works not otherwise represented in western libraries; they were collected by Alphonse Mingana (whose grammar was mentioned above) during the course of two journeys to the Middle East financed by the generosity of Edward Cadbury.

Syriac scribes usually follow the old tradition, already found in ancient Mesopotamia, of adding at the end of the text they are copying a colophon, giving details of the date and place of writing, as well as their own name; and if there was empty space still available, their horrorevacu might lead them to fill it with imprecations against anyone who borrowed the book and failed to return it. Jottings about some contemporary event might also find their way into empty end leaves, and one of the earliest, and probably contemporary, accounts of the Arab invasion of Palestine is to be found on the fly leaf of a sixth century Gospel manuscript in the British Library. The scribe of a much more recent (late nineteenth century) Mingana manuscript has left us with a moving narrative of several pages describing the massacre just suffered by the Syrian Orthodox communities of SE Turkey in 1895-6.

Habent sua fata libelli. Later owners, as well as the original scribes, were apt to add their names to manuscripts, sometimes even adding the price they paid for it. One such owner, to whom Syriac scholarship owes an inestimable debt, was Moses of Nisibis, abbot of the Syrian monastery in Egypt. Shortly after 926 he went to Baghdad to petition the Caliph on the matter of the tax problems faced by his own and other Egyptian monasteries. On his way there and back (932)

he visited various Mesopotamian monasteries, buying up old Syrian manuscripts wherever he could, thus accumulating a magnificent collection of texts - which today form the nucleus of both the Vatican and the British Library holdings of Syriac manuscripts (some of those in the Vatican, bought in the early eighteenth century, still bear the marks of a mishap on the journey to Rome, when a load of them fell into the Nile). The contents of Moses' superb library have now been reconstructed, on the basis of his various notes of ownership, by H. Evelyn White in his The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and Scetis (New York, 1923).

Although the authorities of the British Museum were led to believe that they had bought up from the monastery all remaining Syriac manuscripts that had been left by Elias Assemani in 1707, it is now known that several dozen old Syriac manuscripts still remain in the monastery, locked away today in the safe keeping of the abbot's cell. During the two visits to the remote desert monastery that I made in the winter of 1978/9 (one ended in a sandstorm) the abbot, who alone has the key, successfully eluded me.

Modern owners, on the other hand, sometimes like to obliterate any too telling evidence of a manuscript's origin. In the Mingana collection there is a group of single leaves of early manuscripts cut out with scissors from their rightful home, and in several cases it is possible to mate them up - at least figuratively - with the original manuscripts from which they were taken - all at St Catharine's monastery on Mount Sinai: one pair of leaves indeed proved to be part of a unique manuscript containing the works of the seventh century mystic Sahdona (or Martryus), today divided up between Birmingham, Strasbourg, Leningrad and Milan! Happily it is certain that it was not Mingana who was the vandal: he bought all these fragments from a Paris dealer. A word of warning: such chance discoveries of 'marriages' between loose leaves in different libraries can have unexpected and time-consuming consequences: one turned out to involve me in the writing of an entire book. But this is part of the fascination of the whole business.

European and American libraries are usually reasonably well catalogued, but catalogues do not always give away the true nature of a manuscript's actual contents. I would never have looked at 'Initium martyrii Maximi Palaestiniensis' had I not been interested in another text in the same manuscript, yet this turned out to be an astonishing document - an early 'anti-life' of Maximus the Confessor (died 662), written by a theological opponent, evidently within a few decades of his death. The manuscript proved to be a very rare example of an early Maronite text, and it incidentally threw some light on the exceedingly obscure origins of the Maronites themselves.

In the case of Middle Eastern libraries, for which catalogues are a rarity, the unexpected is always present (provided one can get access in the first place!). What treasures are still to be found there can be seen from the lengthy list of Professor Vabbus' discoveries as a result of his systematic examination of these collections (the

bibliography of his publications, given in the recent Festschrift in his honour, runs to over 50 monographs and 200 articles!).

One exciting moment in my own experience was when I came across a note by the great twelfth century Patriarch and chronicler, Michael the Syrian, to the effect that it was he who had copied the huge two volume collection of lives of the saints which I had perched precariously on a diminutive coffee table in the office of the secretary to the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch in Damascus. (On a subsequent visit to the Patriarch, His Holiness Mar Ignatius Yakub III, very kindly allowed me to work in the library itself, - almost an embarrassment de richesse!).

It is usually only in the larger episcopal libraries that really old manuscripts are now to be found, but almost every village church will have a small collection of liturgical manuscripts (for the most part printed books are not used in church services). The colophons of these can often prove to be an unexpected source for local history. An unusually long colophon in a Fengitho (the approximate equivalent of a western breviary) which I recently saw at the Syrian Orthodox monastery of Mar Gabriel in Tur Abdin told how the manuscript had originally been written in 1838 by a novice called Zaytun at Mar Gabriel, then recently repopulated after it had lain desolate for 120 years as a result of various pillages. Probably in 1915, called 'the year of the sword' in local tradition, it had been taken as plunder by Muslims from the monastery, eventually to be bought back in 1929 by a certain subdeacon George, who then donated it to the village church of Keferze (also in Tur Abdin), where it had remained until very recently, when the present abbot of Mar Gabriel, Rabban Samuel Akdash, and the head of the monastic school there, Malfone Isa Gollan, happened to visit the church and read the colophon; they arranged to have another Fengitho copied for the church, and so the manuscript of 1838 (a fine piece of calligraphy) has now been returned to its original home where it is greatly cherished.

It will come as a surprise to many to learn that Syriac manuscripts are still being copied in the Middle East. Facilities for printing are rare, and the printing press, donated by Queen Victoria, which the late Syrian Orthodox metropolitan of Mardin, Mar Yuhannon Dolobani, used for publishing Syriac texts, has now been taken over for the use of the local Turkish newspaper. The scribes are normally deacons, priests or monks; Father Butrus Ogdluy, now a priest to the émigré Syrian Orthodox Turks in Germany, whom I first met when he was school master in the small town of Midyat in Tur Abdin, had written some 100 manuscripts by the time he was thirty years old. If one has the privilege of meeting such people, one quickly becomes aware that to study Syriac is to study a tradition which is still very much alive.

APPENDIX: The Syrian Churches

Syriac literature is closely tied to church history, and the variety of names in use for the various Syrian churches, coupled with the popular misconceptions which are current (even in otherwise reliable modern works) about their theological position, combine to increase the bewilderment of the outsider and the newcomer to the subject.

First of all it will be helpful to clarify the confusing terminology by means of a table:

Official name	Also known as	Other (European) sobriquets	Uniate counterpart (in communion with Rome)
Syrian Orthodox Church	West Syrians	Monophysites, Jacobites	Syrian Catholics
Church of the East (more recently 'Assyrian Church of the East')	East Syrians	Nestorians, Assyrians	Chaldeans

The terms 'Nestorian' and 'Monophysite' were originally devised as opprobrious epithets, and imply the holding of heretical opinions; as such they are misleading and should be avoided. 'Jacobite' derives from Jacob Baradaeus who re-organized the Syrian Orthodox Church in the mid sixth century at a time when the emperor Justinian was trying to suppress its hierarchy. 'Assyrian', very popular to-day in the Middle East and émigré communities (since it provides a much sought for 'national' identity) seems to originate, as far as its present day connotations are concerned, with the conjecture of some nineteenth century archaeologists and missionaries that the modern Christian population of North Iraq (mostly East Syrians) are descendants of the ancient Assyrians. For nationalist reasons some Syrian Orthodox laity now also like to call themselves Assyrian, to add to the confusion (popular names to give children nowadays include Sargon, Hammurabi etc.).

In their essentials the divisions that exist to-day between the various eastern churches originate in the different stands taken over the christological controversies of the fifth century. Convenient touchstones are provided by the two main councils of that century: the Council of Ephesus in 431, and the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The mainstream of Christian tradition represented to-day by the Eastern Orthodox Churches (Greek, Russian etc), the Maronite and the Roman Catholic Church, and the various derived western Churches, accept both councils, whereas the Church of the East rejects Ephesus and accepts Chalcedon, and the Syrian Orthodox Church (along with the other 'Oriental Orthodox' Churches, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic) accepts Ephesus but rejects Chalcedon.

Looked at theologically, the Church of the East represents one end of the theological spectrum, making a sharp distinction between the divine and human natures in Christ (with the consequence that they do not allow Mary the title of Theotokos, 'bearer of God', but only Christotokos); the mainstream Christian tradition stands more in the middle, but still makes a real, albeit lesser, distinction between the two natures; while the Syrian Orthodox represent the other end of the spectrum (but by no means the extreme end), for they see only one nature in the incarnate Christ, 'composed' out of two: to them, the presence of any duality in the incarnate Christ would vitiate the full reality of the incarnation. Ironically the Chalcedonian definition of faith, which ended up by declaring that the incarnate Christ existed 'in two natures', had in the text of its earlier draft 'out of two natures' - a formula which is perfectly acceptable to the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Here it should be emphatically stressed that, contrary to widespread western opinion, the Syrian Orthodox do not hold that the one nature in Christ is only the divine, having 'swallowed up' the human: this is the Eutychian position, which the Syrian Orthodox have always condemned as completely heretical. Thus the term 'Heno-physite', rather than 'Monophysite', would be a much more appropriate one by which to describe the Oriental Orthodox Churches in contrast to the 'Dyophysite' Churches which accept Chalcedon.

A few words should be said about each of the three Churches which belong to the Syriac cultural world.

The Syrian Orthodox Church

The Syrian Orthodox Church only gradually became separated from the mainstream church in the course of the late fifth and the sixth century, and it was not until the first half of the sixth century that a separate hierarchy developed as a result of the deposition, by the emperor Justin, of the anti-Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, Severus. Since then their patriarch (one of five patriarchs of Antioch to-day) has never resided at Antioch; the present patriarch, His Holiness Mar Ignatios Yakub III, lives in Damascus. Syrian Orthodox communities are now chiefly to be found in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey (Tur Abdin in the SE, and Istanbul), Iraq and India (Kerala); there is also a sizable diaspora in western Europe (Germany, Holland, Sweden) and the Americas (the present Syrian Orthodox Archbishop of America, Mar Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, was one of the first owners of the famous Isaiah scroll from Qumran; he gives a fascinating account of this episode in his life in his Treasure of Qumran: My Story of the Dead Sea Scrolls (London, 1968).

The Uniate Syrian Catholic Church, with its own Patriarch (in Beirut), has its origins in the late 18th century.

The twentieth century has witnessed two great scholar patriarchs, the Syrian Catholic Ephrem Rahmani (died 1929), and the Syrian Orthodox Ephrem Barsom (died 1957).

The Church of the East

This Church was based in the Sasanid empire and so its history has always been distinct from that of the churches within the Roman Empire. It is indicative of the poor communication between Christians in the two empires that it was only in 410 that the Council of Nicaea (325) became known to and was officially accepted by the Church of the East. Whereas martyrdom was effectively brought to an end in the Roman Empire by the conversion of Constantine, it was only in the mid fourth century that Persian Christians experienced their first serious bout of persecution from the Zoroastrian authorities; persecution was to continue intermittently right up to the collapse of the Sasanid empire in the seventh century. A remarkable feature of the history of this Church is its missionary expansion across Asia, reaching China by 635 - an event recorded on a bilingual Syriac-Chinese stele erected in 781, and discovered at Sian-fu in 1625; one unexpected by-product of this missionary enterprise has come down to us in the form of a diary of a thirteenth century East Syrian monk from Peking, Rabban Sawma, who travelled to Europe as an emissary of the Mongols (there is an English translation by E.A.W. Budge, The Monks of Kublai Khan: The History and Travels of Rabban Sawma (London, 1928)).

Although European writers have derogatively called this Church 'Nestorian', its connections with Nestorius are rather tenuous: only in the sixth century did any of Nestorius' writings get translated into Syriac. As a matter of fact, beside their own great theologian, Babai (died 628), the East Syrian Church's main source of theological inspiration was provided by the writings of the Greek Theodore of Mopsuestia (died 428).

The Patriarch (or Catholicos, as he is more frequently called) has always had as his titular see Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the Sasanid winter capital, known to the Arabs as the 'twin cities' (al-Mada'in), to the south of Baghdad. In the last hundred years or so their history has been a particularly tragic one; their previous Patriarch, Mar Shiman, was a refugee from Iraq, and lived in America (where there is a considerable émigré community). The present Patriarch, Mar Dinkha (who was consecrated in St Barnabas' Church, Ealing on October 17th, 1976) for the moment lives in Tehran, but hopes to be able to move his permanent residence to Baghdad. His flock are chiefly to be found in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and south India (Kerala). As well as in the United States there is also a small émigré community in London.

The vigorous uniate Chaldean Church goes back to 1550; its Patriarch resides in Baghdad.

The Maronite Church

The origins of the Maronites as a separate church are obscure, although they are evidently tied up somehow with the monothelite/dyothelite controversy of the seventh and early eighth century. The

Maronite Church has accepted the authority of Rome since the time of the Crusades and their Patriarch Jeremiah II assisted at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The Maronite Patriarch (one of the five Patriarchs of Antioch - the remaining two being the (Chalcedonian) Orthodox and Uniate Melkite Patriarchs) now resides outside Beirut; over the last century or so, in particular, the Maronite patriarchate has played an important role in Lebanese politics.

At Kaslik, just south of Jounieh in the Lebanon, there is a Maronite university, L'Université Saint Esprit, which produces a valuable periodical largely devoted to Syriac studies, Parole de l'Orient.

Maronites have played an important role in the history of Syriac scholarship in Europe ever since the establishment in Rome, in 1584, of a Maronite College. In the seventeenth century it was a Maronite, Gabriel Sionita, who was largely responsible for the Syriac text in the great Paris Polyglot Bible, while in the eighteenth century the Assemani family produced a notable succession of Syriac scholars, chief among whom was Joseph Simon Assemani (died 1768): his Bibliotheca Orientalis, a survey of Syriac literature based on the riches of the Vatican Library, in three fat volumes (Rome, 1719-28), is still an important work of reference for the Syriac scholar, (a photographic reprint was published in 1975).

Some literature

A recent historical survey of the various oriental churches is given in A.S. Atiya, A History of Eastern Christianity (London, 1968). For the modern situation D. Attwater's The Christian Churches of the East (2 volumes; London, 1968) gives information on ecclesiastical matters, while R.B. Betts' Christians in the Arab East (London, 1979) is concerned more with demography and politics.

A particularly fascinating account of the Syrian Orthodox Church at the end of the nineteenth century is given by O.H. Parry, Six Months in a Syrian Monastery (London, 1895) - the monastery was Deir ez Zafaran, on the edge of Tur Abdin in SE Turkey; at that time it was the seat of the patriarch.

Thanks to the Anglican educational missions to the Church of the East there are several readable accounts of this Church and its people, notably A.J. Maclean and W.H. Browne, The Catholicos of the East and his People (London, 1892), and W.A. Wigram, The Assyrians and their Neighbours (London, 1929). The older work by G.P. Badger, The Nestorians and their Rituals (two volumes; London, 1852) has become something of a classic. A scholarly account of the traumatic history of the Church of the East in the nineteenth and twentieth century is provided by J. Joseph, The Nestorians and their Muslim Neighbours (Princeton, 1961).

EPHREM AS POET

by Peter Robson

What distinguishes a poet from a prose writer is his ability to use words and ideas which are charged with a variety of meanings all implied in the poem but not expressed there. As literature progresses and knowledge widens the mine of ideas becomes more extensive and the culmination is a poem equipped with notes, like T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land', or one whose full understanding is limited to the poet himself. No-one else can add the notes, for anyone attempting to do so is introducing a second subjective element which can distort the poet's original intentions. Such notes can only be introduced as an indication of what the reader should look for. If I were to add notes to the first line of Longfellow's 'Evangeline', for instance :

This is the forest primeval, the whispering pines and
the hemlocks

I might draw attention to the hexameter line reminiscent of Vergil, to the inversion of the fourth and fifth words for purposes of avoiding prosiness, to the use of 'primeval' as an unusual and evocative word, to the secrecy implied by 'whispering' and to judicial execution, like Socrates', by 'hemlock', some or all or none of which thoughts might have been in the poet's mind. Or there may be other implications which the limits of my education and intelligence hide from my sight.

The same is true for a translator, and translation of poetry is an art so refined as to be almost impossible, for the stresses and above-mentioned implications of words vary so much from language to language that something must inevitably be lost.

Ephrem the Syrian (306? - 373) was not only a very great poet and theologian, he was the foremost wielder of an involved and allusive Syriac which will not translate without a host of explanatory notes. However, adding notes to his whole poetic corpus would be a thankless task for several lifetimes, and even then the work would fall beneath the strictures of subjectivity and ignorance mentioned above.

Of Ephrem's severely ascetic life there is no need to treat here, and what I propose to do is to subject some strophes from his 'Hymns against Julian and the Jews' to a close examination. I have not chosen the Julian Hymns because they are intrinsically the best, but because I know them best and they can be examined without a study of Ephrem's theology which, like his poetry, is deep and allusive.

Briefly, Julian was Roman Emperor from 361 to 363.

Christianity had become the state religion of the Empire in 312 under Constantine and he and his son Constantius had maintained the faith, but Julian attempted in a reign of only twenty months to return the pagan gods to Rome. He was killed in battle against the Persians and when his body was brought to Nisibis Ephrem stood and gloated over it, as he says in the third hymn. Ephrem's literary background was largely scriptural, and biblical allusions abound, as I have indicated. But please remember the caveats with which this article opened. Much fuller treatment of Ephrem both as poet and theologian will be found in Robert Murray's wonderful book Symbols of Church and Kingdom (Cambridge 1975), and there is a fine introduction and translation of twelve poems in S.P. Brock's The Harp of the Spirit (Studies Supplementary to Sobornost no. 4). Otherwise the only satisfactory translation of Ephrem that I know is that by R. Lavenant S.J. with notes by F. Graffin S.J. : Hymnes sur le Paradis (Sources Chrétiennes Paris 1968). All I try to do in this short article is to whet an appetite, with an insistence that the only way to study Ephrem properly is in Syriac.

An admirable and brief analysis of Ephrem's prosody is given by Professor John Gwyn in his eighty-year old introduction to Ephrem in Series II Vol 13 of the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers. I reproduce a part of it (pp 148-9) :

The Syriac Hymnody is constructed on the Hebrew principle of parallelism, in which thought answers to thought in clauses of repetitive or antithetical balance : but, unlike the Hebrew, its clauses are further regulated by strict equivalence of syllabic measure. But though in this latter respect it seems to approach to the forms of Western verse, ancient or modern, yet the resemblance is but superficial : Syriac verse is not measured by feet, whether determined by syllabic quantity as in Greek and Latin, or by accent, as in English and other modern languages. Thus the metre of Syriac poetry is substantially the 'thought-metre' (as it has been well called) of Hebrew, reduced to regularity of form by the rule that each of the lines into which the balanced clauses fall, shall consist of a fixed number of syllables. There is no systematic rhyme; but the nature of the language, which by reason of its uniformity of etymological structure abounds in words of like terminations, often causes correspondences of sound amounting to rhyme, or at least to assonance. The lines are very short; not exceeding twelve syllables, sometimes confined to four. Ephraim, though not the actual inventor, was the first master of this metrical system, the first to develop it into system and variety. His favourite metres are the five-syllabled and the seven-syllabled. In his more elaborate poems, such as the Nisibene series, which are rather Odes than Hymns, the strophes or stanzas into which the lines are arranged are often long and of complicated structure, each strophe consisting of many lines (ranging from four up to fourteen or more) of various lengths according to a fixed scheme rigidly adhered to throughout the poem - sometimes throughout a group of cognate poems.

In other poems, especially in Hymns intended for popular or ecclesiastical use, where simplicity of structure is suitable, the lines which compose each strophe, whatever their number, are of uniform length.

And now to the Hymns against Julian. I have chosen two consecutive six-line strophes from the first two of the four, and have added fairly full notes on the poetic features I found there - but please remember how subjective this is.

1 : 12 The Kings, the sons of truth, in the figure of two bulls made the two testaments equal and yoked them in a harmonious yoke. They toiled, they adorned the earth and briers put on the beauty of the wheat, and the seed spread its colour even over the tare. In their freedom they put it (sc. the colour) off when they put off again the beauty.

The labour with which the true faith was cultivated by Constantine and Constantius is described in allusive detail. These two emperors are coupled, as they are in the hymn De Ecclesia (verse 15) where they are spoken of as 'the kings who gave shade (and) refreshed us in the heat'. Using the bible as their yoke of oxen they spread the beauty of the faith, and even the most unpromising thorns and tares were covered with wheat.

The yoking of the Testaments would be congenial to Ephrem, as his writings show how much he depended upon the O.T., neglected or misrepresented by some of the Gnostics whose work Ephrem felt constrained to denounce. Indeed, although the 'seed' here is, to maintain the Matthaean image, 'the sons of the Kingdom', its spreading throughout the world recalls the promise to Abraham (Gen.22.17,18), thus 'yoking the testaments' indeed.

Constantine also 'yoked' Church and State after his conversion, and Ephrem obviously saw this as harmonious and a light burden. Under the new so-called freedom, however, the thorns and tares had shown their true colours (cf. Carmina Nisibena 11:32), the same fate had befallen the world as in Jer 12.13.

1 : 13 Some of them were thorns, some of them grains of wheat, some of them gold, some of them ashes. The tyrant was a furnace for the beauty of the true ones. Who saw a glorious vision where truth went in and was tried in the furnace of deceit? Error magnified the true ones and was not aware.

In the chiastic opening of this strophe the image shifts from field to furnace. Ephrem appreciated that despite the ubiquitous spread of the wheat under Julian's predecessors the unworthy

were lurking just below the surface, tares and dross which had been accepted as wheat and gold. This is another benefit unknowingly conferred by Julian in his repression. Casting them into a furnace as did Nebuchadnezzar (to whom explicit reference is made later in this Hymn) he separated the gold and dross. Despite the change in symbolism the idea of the beauty of holiness is maintained and a new scheme of images is fitted into the overall scheme.

A new term, 'tyrant' (**ܬܝܪܐܢܬ**), is used of Julian. In his hymn De Paradiso 13 : 12 the same word is used of Satan. Not only is it derived from the Greek **τύραννος** (tyrannos) and so a perfect term for the Hellenising emperor, but from its resemblance to a word meaning flint, it can also mean contumacious or rebellious.

The formula 'Who saw?' (**ܕܝܠܝܢ**) is not an uncommon way of introducing a paradox with Ephrem. Here a paganising emperor separates true from specious Christians. Only the 'true' (or 'firm' - **ܕܝܠܝܢ** can mean both) resisted the temptation to join the emperor's side. The vision is 'glorious' because it demonstrates the strength of the true in the face of a purification like that in Mal 3 : 3. The furnace metaphor is also found in the historians of the period, e.g. Socrates Scholasticus History 3 : 13 where, as elsewhere, I think he is in debt to Ephrem.


'Error' (**ܕܝܠܝܢ**) and 'true ones' are well contrasted, and the irony of the doomed 'wanderers' (the root 'to err' also = 'wander, be about to die' etc.) testing those firm in faith is more than a simple difference between true and false.

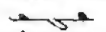
2 : 7 The pagans bore about their idols and raved and the circumcised blew trumpets and were mad, and all sang with their voices and behaved disorderly. The feast was like the one in the desert, the Good One who chastened those stirred up by one calf is He who chastened many stirred up by one King.

This strophe, without introducing any new ideas, draws together features from the Hymns so far by means of imagery and vocabulary. The first line recalls Isaiah 46 and may refer to processions in which the idols were carried round.

In order to reintroduce the parallel with the Golden Calf the 'circumcised' (Jews) are again mentioned. The circumcised here seem to have been won over entirely to paganism, taking a full, ashamedly wild part in its festival.

Ephrem changes vocabulary to avoid repeating earlier lines verbatim (e.g. **ܕܝܠܝܢ** for **ܕܝܠܝܢ**, and **ܕܝܠܝܢ** for **ܕܝܠܝܢ**). Again there is a characteristic climax of simple phrases, ending with




the double entendre of  which may mean either 'behaved wildly' or 'became contemptible'.

Having thus established with the festival a point of contact between the idolatrous pagans and the Jews, the scene is set for fuller comparison between the Emperor and the Golden Calf. The root  reappearing frequently is, together with other words for going or driving mad, Ephrem's favourite way of describing Julian's effect upon his subjects.

2 : 8 He crushed that calf that he might cut short the disturbance and destroyed that crown that he might cut off the madness; as a physician he cut off the cause of the disturbance. Both of them were overthrown in the south - by means of hard iron he destroyed that calf, and with a dreaded spear he destroyed that King.

Julian's position is represented as very similar to that of the calf in Ex 32. As God through Moses smashed the Golden Calf, so did he bring down Julian, smashing the golden crown that symbolised his power. God excised him and with him the 'stirring-up' into pagan excesses as the Decalogue brought an end to the revelry of Ex. 32.15f.

The Calf was destroyed near Sinai, but the exact place of Julian's fall is nowhere made plain. It was, however, near Corduene and Ctesiphon, and so some 350 miles south-west of Ephrem's home, Nisibis.

The four verbs in lines 1 and 2 are interesting:  is used in the Peshitta of Ex. 32.30,  implies both physical cutting and excommunication, and  (which appears twice) connects paronomastically with the 'circumcised' of the preceding strophe, described with the same root.

by Frances Young

Introduction

South of Armenia and west of the Caspian Sea is a mountainous area that falls within Iran. Here in the late Nineteenth Century some American missionaries heard of a manuscript in the possession of the Nestorian Patriarch which was to have a profound effect upon the study of the development of Christology. It was the lost Book of Heracleides, one of the apologetic treatises composed by Nestorius during his long years of exile. In the eyes of many scholars it proved that Nestorius had never been a 'Nestorian', that is, he had never taught those doctrines branded as Nestorian and condemned as heretical. So it was a sensational and controversial discovery. Unfortunately, however, direct access to the text was difficult for many specialists in the Greek patristic field - it had been preserved in Syriac translation. It was a number of years before the text was published in full, and the first appearance of the Syriac text was almost immediately followed by a French translation for the benefit of those unable to cope with Syriac.

It has become increasingly apparent that Syriac is an indispensable tool for the study of the Christological controversies. Even if we confine ourselves to the period leading up to Chalcedon (as most undergraduate syllabuses do), the Greek originals of large quantities of relevant literature have been destroyed and what survives has been collected together from Syriac literature. Why should this be so?

The term 'Syriac' is used to embrace all Christian Aramaic texts, but originally Syriac was the dialect used in Osrhoene, an area of which Edessa was the capital. Until 215 AD, this was an independent kingdom, and the local Church later boasted some colourful legends concerning the conversion of their King Abgar the Black. Clearly there was an 'indigenous' Church here of very ancient origin. After 215, when the area had been taken over by the Empire, this Church came increasingly under the influence of the Patriarch of Antioch, though it still liked to assert its independence, and its use of Syriac gave it some counterbalancing influence in all the Aramaic-speaking areas of the Empire. At the time of the Christological controversies, Edessa was still part of the Roman Empire, but Nisibis, the other important cultural centre, had been abandoned to the Persians. This was very much a border area.

Syrian influence was very important in Antioch. The Church at Antioch had had a rough time during the Arian controversy, and was now beginning to consolidate again its ancient power and authority. To establish hegemony over the Syriac-speaking area was an important element in its resurgence. This was not merely a matter of keeping close diplomatic relations with Edessa; it meant also keeping in touch with the local populations of Syria and Palestine. Since the time of

Alexander the Great, Syria had been dominated by the language and culture of Greece; Antioch was the metropolis, under Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine rulers. Still in the late Fourth Century Antioch was an important centre of Greek learning and culture, boasting famous sophists like Libanius, whose brilliant pupil John Chrysostom (the Golden-mouth) became the most famous preacher of the Greek Church. But by this time, Antioch was surrounded by increasingly influential pressures from the native Syrian culture. All around the capital city, living in disused tombs and caves, were ascetics, many of them Syriac-speaking, completely unaffected by the sophisticated education and culture of the capital. The urban inhabitants were not indifferent. The city itself was becoming culturally schizophrenic, and its wider influence depended on a flexible response to the resurgence of the native Syrian heritage. For the early Fifth Century the situation is well-exemplified by Theodoret. He was the child of well-to-do Antiochene parents and was eventually to inherit considerable wealth. He clearly went through the Greek educational system, because he writes according to all the conventional literary norms, quotes the classics like Homer and Plato, and corresponds with contemporary sophists. His Greek is beautiful, marked by a perfection and simplicity of structure which carries the reader effortlessly with his argument. But Greek, it seems, was his second language, the language of his education - that is why it is so flawless, no doubt! His native language was Syriac; and his childhood and youth were marked by regular visits to the famous ascetics around the city - after all, one of them had cured his flashy socialite mother of an eye-complaint and converted her to a sober life, and another had eventually promised her a son if she would dedicate him to God as Hannah had dedicated hers. On inheriting his fortune, Theodoret gave it all away and joined a monastery in the depths of the Syrian countryside. Later he became bishop of Cyrrhus, a town far away in the Eastern part of the Roman province, not far from the Euphrates. In the day-to-day business of his diocese he no doubt used Syriac almost exclusively, even though Greek was his literary language, and he regularly preached in Greek in Antioch. Antiochene ascendancy depended on such bilingual competence.

The Nestorian controversy developed quickly into a doctrinal contest between the Patriarchates of Antioch and Alexandria. Cyril of Alexandria and John of Antioch marshalled their rival forces for the Council at Ephesus. John was in a minority, but Cyril behaved so badly in attempting to hold the council before John and his 'Orientals' had arrived, that any hope of a settlement was excluded. The breakdown of the council was not surprising; more remarkable is the fact that Cyril and John agreed to a 'Formulary of Reunion' a few years later. The two sides never really came together and the affair only broke out again with new protagonists, Domnus of Antioch supported by Theodoret, and Dioscorus of Alexandria. There is no need here to repeat the sad history of the 'Robber Synod' and its reversal at Chalcedon. The point now is that the background to these events was competition for influence between two great patriarchal sees, and this competition was played out not only among the ecclesiastical politicians and bishops in Council, but also in the Syriac-speaking areas of Palestine, Syria and the East. The allegiance of Edessa was crucial.

From 411, the bishop of Edessa was Rabbula. He was an important figure in the development of the Syriac church. He probably encouraged the revised translation of the scriptures known as the Peshitta; and he promoted the use of the four separate Gospels rather than the Diatesseron (Tatian's Harmony, which had been predominantly used in the Syrian Church up to this date). Theodoret tells how he too rooted out and destroyed copies of the Diatesseron in the area of his diocese during his episcopate. The Syrian church was being brought into line with the Church of the West under Rabbula's powerful hand. Here then Edessa had an important and influential bishop, highly regarded for his ascetic life, but also very determined - indeed, regarded by some as tyrannical.

At the Council of Ephesus, Rabbula was with the 'Orientals' and signed their documents. He followed Edessa's traditional allegiance to the Antiochene Patriarchate. Almost immediately afterwards he switched his support to Cyril, and there is some evidence that his own theological views were already inclining in that direction before the Council. His defection to Cyril was a serious matter. He knew the Antiochene tradition from inside, identified as the real 'Fathers of Nestorianism' the respected Antiochene theologians, Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, and proscribed their writings within the area of his jurisdiction. Cyril's treatises on the true faith were circulated in Syriac, and Rabbula carried with him many Syrian monks and bishops, particularly those in Palestine, an area always subject to influence from Egypt anyway. Besides, the Palestinians seem to have had theological leanings which would in any case have followed the Monophysite position.

The Church at Edessa itself was not so wholeheartedly behind him, however. Rabbula died in 435, and he was succeeded by Ibas. As a presbyter, Ibas had opposed Rabbula's policies, and on his succession to the see, he reversed the Edessene stance. The works of Theodore, the 'Interpreter', were translated into Syriac and widely circulated. Ibas, like Theodoret, suffered for his alleged Nestorianism during the ensuing outbreak of controversy, though both were exonerated at the Council of Chalcedon (451). However, within a generation, the persecution of 'Nestorians' in the Roman Empire led to the retreat of many Syrian scholars over the border to Nisibis (489), and the Antiochene theologians and exegetes in Syriac translation became the Fathers and Doctors of the Persian (or Assyrian) Church - hence the surviving small Christian community in Iran is usually called the Nestorian Church by Western scholars.

The Syrian church was divided then, not only by the boundary between Rome and Persia, but by theological traditions. The Nestorians were separated from the Western and Byzantine tradition, and preserved the Antiochene theology intact; the Monophysites (or later Jacobites) remained within the Empire but were in opposition to one Byzantine government after another, claiming to preserve the theological heritage of Cyril. Neither side could be accommodated by the unhappy compromise at Chalcedon, to which, for quite different reasons, Rome and (most of the time) Constantinople continued to adhere.

Both groups preserved material from the original controversies in order to justify their continuing position, and they preserved it in Syriac. They preserved not only complete works, but also ancient collections of florilegia. These were collections of extracts for use in debate, a form of argument which seems to have been developed particularly during the Fifth Century Christological debates. Sometimes incriminating selections were collected from the works of an opponent to prove that his doctrines were heretical; sometimes collections were made from the commonly accepted Fathers and authorities to prove that tradition supported one's own side - rather like using scriptural texts. Many collections originally put together in Greek continued to be circulated in Syriac translations; others were utilised by such controversialists as Severus of Antioch, and so found their way into Syriac when loyal Monophysites translated his works.

Hence it is to Syriac sources that we have to turn to trace the surviving remains of the great theologians whose works were eventually proscribed by the Byzantine government - that is, most of the fragments of Diodore of Tarsus and a large proportion of the extant remains of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Syriac catalogues give us our fullest evidence about the extent of their literary activity, and indicate that much more was preserved as late as the fourteenth century, when Ebedjesu made up the catalogues, than has survived to the present day. But it is not only Antiochene works which have been preserved in Syriac. For the Monophysites the great Fathers and Doctors were Athanasius and Cyril, and some lost works of each have been found in Syriac translation. Nor was the literature of Christological controversy the only kind that was translated; the Syrians had versions of treatises and erudite encyclopedias by Eusebius and Epiphanius, and in some cases the Greek originals have not survived. It is therefore well worth surveying the most important Greek Patristic literature which is known to us chiefly, if not exclusively, through the medium of the Syriac language.

Section A. The literature of Christological Controversy

1. The fragments of Diodore of Tarsus

A few Greek and Latin fragments have been preserved, but the vast majority are to be found in Syriac sources. All are contained in hostile florilegia. For this reason their reliability has been seriously called in question; it is likely that they have been misrepresented by being quoted out of context, if not actually mutilated or falsified. However, they are indispensable in view of the fact that they are the only evidence we have, and since many of them preserve a terminology quite different from that adopted by Diodore's successor, Theodore, many scholars are disposed to accept them as authentic, though cautiously. The Syriac material is to be found in British Museum Codex 12156, and in the works of Severus of Antioch. The fragments from the first source have been edited and translated by M. Briere in *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 10 (1946) 231-283; all fragments, including those in Greek and Latin, have been collected by R. Abramowski 'Der theologische Nachlass des Diodor von Tarsus' *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (ZNW) 42 (1949) 19-69, who supplies a German translation.

One of the crucial problems raised by these fragments derives from the lack of context. Abramowski ('Untersuchungen zu Diodor v. Tarsus' ZNW 30 (1931) 234-262) seems to have completely misinterpreted frag. 2, and misled so great a commentator as A. Grillmeier in the process. (His *Christ in Christian Tradition* (ET 1st edit. London 1964; 2nd edit. enlarged and revised 1975) has become the standard account of the development of Christology.) As Greer states, "The paratactic nature of Syriac and the ambiguous use of relative words almost eliminate clarity"; but he argues convincingly that in this fragment Diodore is attempting to give a statement of Apollinarian teaching, against which he was arguing, and not stating his own view. This is confirmed by what he says in frag. 26. The situation proves how indispensable is a knowledge of Syriac for wrestling with the interpretation of these texts. A good approach to the subject would be to read Greer's article: 'The Antiochene Christology of Diodore of Tarsus' J.T.S. NS 17 (1966) 327-341. He provides an English translation of a number of the crucial fragments.

2. Theodore of Mopsuestia

Passages from Theodore's Christological works, particularly the *De Incarnatione*, were used against him at the Fifth Council of Constantinople (553), when he was condemned. Many of these were drawn from Cyril of Alexandria's work *Contra Diodorum et Theodorum*, which seems to have consisted of hostile florilegia. Unfortunately this work is lost, and can only be reconstructed from a Latin version of the Acts of the Council, and from quotations used by such writers as the Monophysite Severus of Antioch whose works survive in Syriac. There are also important extracts in the Syriac British Museum Codex 12156 (see above on Diodore). Some passages can be checked against Greek quotations made by Leontius of Byzantium at the time of the controversy, but Syriac nevertheless provides an important witness to the fragments of Theodore's dogmatic treatises. As in the case of Diodore, the reliability of these hostile collections of extracts has been a subject of much dispute.

In the case of Theodore, however, we have a few complete works which provide a broader perspective on his theology, and sometimes they enable us actually to see the fuller context from which a passage has been torn in the hostile florilegia. Of particular importance has been the discovery in Syriac of his *Commentary on John* and his *Catechetical Homilies*.

(a) The Commentary on John

The Antiochene theologians not only developed their own approach to Christology, but they also reacted strongly against the allegorical traditions of exegesis pursued by Origen and his followers. In fact, by this time, there was a general tendency to give more attention to the literal meaning of scripture and use texts in dogmatic argument. But the Antiochenes, and Theodore in particular, insisted upon the historical dimension of the biblical text, and attended to the meaning of the text in its original context. Theodore's *Commentary on John* is one of very few complete examples of a commentary written entirely according to Antiochene methods.

(The Commentaries of Theodoret are far less radical in their approach). He takes the historicity of John's Gospel very seriously, sometimes defending it against variant versions in the Synoptics; he proceeds very largely by paraphrase and careful explication of the text in front of him; he tends not to perceive deeper or symbolic meanings in the Johannine material. This last point is probably a bit unfortunate - in his anxiety to avoid allegory, he has produced a rather pedestrian commentary which lacks insight into the layers of meaning surely to be found in this 'spiritual Gospel'.

The Antiochene reaction against allegory did not succeed in producing anything very close to modern critical methods because its protagonists remained convinced that scripture contained all the truth of the Christian religion, and so read the text in terms of contemporary dogmatic interests. Although Theodoret took a more radical line with respect to the Old Testament this certainly affected his approach to the Johannine material. He labours to insist on the distinction between what is said of the Man Assumed and what is said of the God-Logos, sometimes rather harshly breaking up the unified Christology of the Gospel. A notorious example is to be found in his comments on John 3.13: no-one ascends to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man. Ascent and descent, he explains, is said of the Man Assumed, because it cannot apply to the divine Logos.

Theodore's awareness of history meant that he could quite realistically appreciate the fact that someone like Nathaniel did not come to an understanding of the full truth about the incarnate Word during Jesus' lifetime. So when Nathaniel confesses that he is Son of God, and King of Israel (1.49), Theodore comments that what he meant was a confession of Jesus' Messiahship. Nathaniel knew nothing of his Sonship by divine generation; he called him Son of God in the same sense as men coming to God by their virtue, are called sons of God. Theodore did not deny the divine generation of the Logos, but he recognised that the apostles only gradually got to know it. This passage is a particularly important one since the controversial part, namely that Jesus was called Son of God only in the sense that other men are, was later quoted as Theodore's own view and helped to condemn him. Here we can see what distortion has taken place by lack of concern with its context. (See J.L.McKenzie, 'The Commentary of Theodoret of Mopsuestia on John 1.46-51', Theological Studies 14 (1953) pp. 73-84).

Thus Theodore's Commentary on John has proved an extremely important work in the assessment of both his exegesis and his theology. Without access to Syriac, the investigator would be severely hampered, even though the text is published with a modern Latin translation. Text J.M.Vosté, Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis Apostoli C.S.C.O. Script. Syr. Ser IV, t.III (Louvain 1940).

(b) The Catechetical Homilies

The Syriac version of the Catechetical Homilies was discovered by A. Mingana and first published in Woodbrooke Studies v & vi (Cambridge 1932-3). Mingana provided an English translation, but it does not always seem to give a good rendering of the sense. More recently R. Tonneau produced a reproduction of the Syriac manuscript with French translation (Les Homélies Catéchétiques de Théodore de Mopsueste ST 145 Vatican 1949).

It was customary in this period for bishops to give a series of lecture-sermons during Lent to instruct those seeking Baptism. Their primary function was to explain the clauses of the baptismal creed which the candidate would recite at his initiation at Easter. The whole series of lectures therefore give a well-rounded account of what Christianity meant for Theodore, and his Christology is set in a much wider theological context than would be the case in controversial or dogmatic works devoted to those specific concerns. Another function was to explain the rites of baptism and eucharist - what happened and what it meant. In Theodore's case, there are in fact ten lectures on the Creed, one on the Lord's Prayer, and five explaining the sacraments. The latter are extremely important evidence for liturgiologists.

It is instructive for the student of early Christian doctrine to see the Christological teaching of an Antiochene like Theodore in this wider theological context. It is so much more possible to grasp what motivated his position, the kind of religious concerns which contributed to the development of his particular view-point. One of the most remarkable things about these lectures is their witness to Theodore's eschatological interests. He has a very clear grasp of Paul's Gospel of the radical newness of what has happened in Christ. His opening words to the new converts are about the 'new song' Christians must sing for the 'new things' they have received; they are dealing with a 'new covenant' in which all old things are abolished. Every man who is in Christ is a new creature, and because of the new covenant 'we receive knowledge of these mysteries so that we may put off the old man and put on the new man who is renewed after the image of him who created him'. Theodore interprets this eschatological language as referring to the future state in heaven, but already anticipated in symbol through the sacraments of the Christian church.

This eschatological perspective explains many of Theodore's characteristic standpoints. He thinks of man as existing in two states, a mutable, mortal state, and an immutable, immortal state, man-in-Adam and man-in-Christ. On the basis of this, he criticised the current Platonic idea of man as a spiritual being trapped in flesh by the Fall, and he emphasised the idea that the Manhood of Christ had to play an active role in achieving the salvation of mankind, because for Theodore salvation depended upon a Christ who was the first-fruits of this new humanity. It also explains his attitude to the Old Testament, another cause of scandal at his doctrines: he insisted that the Old Testament belonged to history and knew nothing directly of the Christ

and the New Age to come; the prophets spoke to men of their own time, and the Song of Songs was Solomon's love poem. Only in an indirect and veiled way did the events of the Old Testament foreshadow the New Creation of the New Testament.

The eschatological perspective also explains Theodore's understanding of the sacraments. The elements represent Christ lying stretched out on the altar as a sacrifice - and Theodore describes this in strikingly realistic terms - but by the invocation of the Holy Spirit, these elements are transformed so as to become immortal, invisible, incorruptible, impassible and immutable, just as the body of Christ was made immortal by the resurrection. When we partake of the body and blood, we may expect to be changed into an immortal and incorruptible nature; 'we believe that through these symbols, as through ineffable signs, we possess sometime beforehand the realities themselves'.

Theodore's style was not highly spoken of in antiquity, and his cumbersome Greek is not enhanced by the Syriac rendering. The repetitiveness of his catechetical lectures is exaggerated by the peculiarities of Syriac idiom, and at times his meaning is quite obscure. Nevertheless, the texts which survive in Syriac are of the utmost importance for our understanding of Theodore's theological position.

3. Nestorius and the Book of Heraclides

The English-speaking world became aware of this important new discovery when Bethune-Baker published his defence of Nestorius in 1908. He quoted extensive passages in an English translation made for him by an anonymous colleague. The text, then still unpublished, he referred to as 'The Bazaar of Heraclides', and it is under that title that many still refer to the work. It seems likely, however, that the Syriac translator rendered the Greek in a misleading way, taking *ἡρακλείδης* as meaning *ἡρακλῆς*, when it really meant something like 'treatise'.

The other puzzle about the title is the attribution to Heraclides. The Syriac translator explains that he was a man from Damascus, held in honour for his way of life and his learning, and in good standing at the court. It is quite clear, however, that the work addresses the reader in the person of Nestorius, and there is no attempt at pseudonymity. The Syriac translator suggests it was published under this strange title 'lest since his own name was a bugbear to many, they should be unwilling to read it and be converted to the truth.' This may well be the motive, but anyone who did actually look inside the work would soon have been undeceived; it could only take in a censor checking library catalogues, if I may put it that way.

The form of the work has also raised questions. The book is not by any means homogeneous. The first part is in dialogue form, Nestorius discussing various different Christological proposals with a character named Sophronius; but the dialogue form is eventually abandoned and Nestorius in his own person gives an account of the

events which doomed him, quoting letters and documents at length, discussing the theological and terminological points at issue, arguing with Cyril, accusing him of a serious miscarriage of justice, claiming that proper enquiry would have shown he was orthodox and innocent of the charges brought against him, and that the great fathers, Gregory, Ambrose and Athanasius taught his doctrine. The first major literary analysis of the work (L. Abramowski, *Untersuchungen zum Liber Heraclidis des Nestorius* (C.S.C.O. 242, Subs. 22 Louvain 1963) has suggested that the treatise as it stands is a compilation of two different works, and the opening dialogue is not in fact the authentic work of Nestorius; this view has not met with universal acceptance, though the literary case is quite strong, stronger than the theological differences observed.

The work is frustrating to read: 'It must be admitted that his style is often turgid and confusing', wrote Anastos. (Milton V. Anastos, 'Nestorius was orthodox' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962) 123.) The repetitiveness of his great theological treatise, the Bazaar of Heraclides, is frustrating, wearisome and painful. It would have been vastly more effective if some expert rhetorician had pruned it of tautology, eliminated contradictions, added the necessary logical definitions which Nestorius unhappily eschewed, and reduced its length by a half or three quarters. But Anastos, for all that, concludes this work is 'the subtlest and most penetrating study of the mystery of the incarnation in the whole of patristic literature.' Most scholars think that judgement exaggerated, but there has been a continuing discussion of what exactly Nestorius' Christological position was, and how far it can be regarded as orthodox in spite of the condemnation of the ancient Church.

The issue turns on what Nestorius meant by his idea of the 'prosopic union', and here the way in which technical metaphysical terms in Greek were rendered into Syriac equivalents clearly affects the discussion a great deal. A useful discussion of these problems will be found in an appendix to Bethune-Baker's study, Nestorius and his Teaching, an essay provided by his collaborator. This collaborator turned out to be R.H. Connolly, who confessed his identity in a review of the English translation by Drivenham and Hodgson (J.T.S. xxvii (1926) 191-200). From his own work he was able to produce a detailed critique of Driver's rendering, thus highlighting the complexity of the task facing the translator. The technical terms are, in his eyes, but a minor problem compared with the often defective nature of the text. He concludes, however, that the defects in the translation are not 'such as to interfere vitally with its value as a presentation of Nestorius' teaching.' Nevertheless debate about its proper interpretation has continued unabated.

The most touching thing about this work is the light it throws on Nestorius' attitudes after decades of exile and suffering for what he believed: 'It is my earnest desire that even by anathematizing me they may escape from blaspheming God, and that those who escape may confess God, holy, almighty and immortal, and not change the image of the incorruptible God for the image of corruptible man, mingling heathenism with Christianity ... The goal of my earnest wish is that

God may be blessed on earth as in heaven; but as for Nestorius, let him be anathema.' He refused to appeal to Pope Leo even when he felt sure that his own views were being expressed in Leo's Tome; better that the truth prevail than be harmed by association with his blackened name. In tribulation he showed a greater generosity of spirit than many who have received the name saint rather than heretic.

Text Ed. R.P. Bedjan, Nestorius, Le livre d'Héraclide de Damas (Paris 1910)

Translations F. Nau, Nestorius, Le livre d'Héraclide de Damas (Paris 1910)

G.R. Driver and L. Hodgson, Nestorius, The Bazaar of Heracleides (Oxford 1925)

4. Cyril of Alexandria

An enormous number of Cyril's writings are extant in Greek, either complete or in fragmentary form; so Syriac finds do not have quite the over-riding significance in his case which they have had for the lost Antiochenes. However a number of important contributions have been made by Syriac translations. Significant fragments are to be found in Syriac authors, notably quotations preserved in the works of Severus of Antioch; there are also a few otherwise lost works available in Syriac manuscripts.

The most important Syriac discovery is his Commentary on Luke. A number of Cyril's Commentaries are extant in Greek: the commentaries on Isaiah, on the Minor Prophets, and on John's Gospel. We also have a number of exegetical treatises, and considerable fragments of other commentaries in the Catenae. (These are commentary 'chains' pieced together from the works of the most famous Fathers; usually the author of each quotation is named, though not always accurately; a great deal of critical work still needs to be done on this material, but it has already proved an important source of exegetical fragments from many authorities.) Nevertheless, in spite of the existence of so much Greek material, the discovery of the Commentary on Luke in Syriac provided a notable addition to our knowledge of Cyril's work. In form it is a series of homilies, and so reflects the concerns of a pastor in the pulpit; his interests are predominantly practical, and there is a recurrent emphasis on the theme of obedience and imitation of Christ. But the Christological issue also keeps appearing: Homily 11 on the baptism of Jesus is clearly framed with Nestorian exegesis in mind, and Cyril labours to show that their plausible conclusions are not valid. Only three of these homilies on Luke survive in Greek, whereas 156 appear in this Syriac version. Some are represented only by a paragraph - in other words only a quotation is given, not the complete text; but others clearly provide the full text of the Patriarch's sermon.

Text J.B. Chabot, S. Cyrilli Alexandrini commentarii in Lucam I (Hom. 1-80) (C.S.C.O. 70 Paris and Leipzig 1912; reprint, Louvain 1954).

Translation R. Tonneau, Latin (C.S.C.O. 140 Louvain 1953)
R. Payne-Smith, A Commentary upon the Gospel according to St. Luke by St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria (Oxford 1859)

In the early stages of the Nestorian controversy, Cyril sent his De Recta Fide to the Emperor. Rabbula himself translated this work into Syriac and circulated it in the area under his jurisdiction. Probably many of the other dogmatic works which have been preserved in Syriac originated from Rabbula's effort to promote Cyril's doctrine. Most of the Syriac material that has been discovered already existed in Greek, but some new material has come to light in the Syriac collections. Publication of the material began with an article by R.Y. Ebied and L.R. Wickham in Muséon 83 (1970) pp. 433-82, and they followed this in 1971 by producing an investigation into the contents of British Museum Codex 14557 (J.T.S. NS 22 pp. 420-34). They reported the contents as including not only Syriac versions of Cyril's Letter on the Nicene Creed, his Explanation of the Twelve Anathemas, and other material already known in Greek, like the Quod unus sit Christus, but also a number of unpublished letters. Their article produced the text and a translation of one of these, entitled The First Letter to the Monks, and discussed its authenticity. In their book, A Collection of Unpublished Syriac Letters of Cyril of Alexandria (C.S.C.O. 359-360, Louvain, 1975), the same scholars using the same manuscript published the Syriac text of some of the letters already known in Greek; since the Greek is known, these provide good evidence for evaluating the relationship between the Syriac translation and the underlying original, while also facilitating some understanding of what a native Greekless speaker of Syriac would have made of the originals - for they are important less for Cyril than for the non-Chalcedonian interpretation of Cyril.

Section B. Other Greek Patristic Literature

1. Eusebius of Caesarea

Eusebius is best known for his Ecclesiastical History which rapidly became famous throughout the Christian world. Since he lived in Palestine, an Aramaic-speaking area, it is perhaps not surprising that the first translation was the Syriac version, probably made as early as the Fourth Century. It is regarded as much superior to the Latin translation made by Rufinus in 403, and it antedates the extant Greek manuscripts.

Text W. Wright and N. McClean, The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius in Syriac (Cambridge 1898)

Eusebius also wrote a History of the Martyrs in Palestine, an account of the final onslaught against Christianity by the Emperor Diocletian and his successors in the East, through which Eusebius himself lived. The work has survived in two versions, a short edition appended to the Ecclesiastical History in some Greek manuscripts (often placed at the end of Book VIII, but not invariably), and a longer version which has survived only in Syriac. This is a most important contemporary document. Eusebius claims to have known a number of the martyrs personally, and in general his work provides a realistic appraisal of the effects of persecution on the Christian population. However, for all his precise statements of date, it has proved an extremely difficult task to reconstruct the chronology of

the persecution on the basis of Eusebius' information, and the reliability of some of his facts has been called in question by certain inscriptions. The Syriac version of the work is largely in the form of individual Acta (in other words it is a collection of possibly independent hagiographies); and in spite of Eusebius' contemporaneity, the stories are told in highly conventional language and even contain certain traditional motifs.

Text W. Cureton, History of the Martyrs of Palestine by Eusebius with English translation (London 1861)

The most important Syriac find is probably the complete text of the Theophania, a work which only survived in Greek in a few brief fragments. Eusebius was at heart an apologist, and his histories were written with apologetic interests. In the Theophania he makes a final plea for the truth of Christianity, summarising all the major arguments he had used earlier in his massive treatises, the Praeparatio Evangelica and the Demonstratio Evangelica. These works had consisted mainly of long extracts from pagan philosophers and from the scriptures, carefully yet confusingly marshalled to establish the Christian case. In the Theophania, however, Eusebius abandons this method and expounds his arguments for himself. The result is a much clearer statement of the case; for Eusebius forcefully summarises in popular rhetorical form many of the well-worn proofs he had developed elsewhere on the basis of great erudition. This was the culmination of his life's work; for it also takes up themes from the Martyrs of Palestine, and the Life of Constantine.

The work can be dated in the 330's when Eusebius was a very old man, probably in his seventies. By this time he had been through the trauma of the Arian controversy, and this gives his Christological statements a particular interest. Eusebius really does not seem to have appreciated what was at stake in the debate with Arius, and still he sticks to a rather naive Origenism, regarding the Logos as a subordinate being capable of mediating the transcendent God to the creation. Eusebius goes to a great deal of trouble to prove that there is only one God and so there can only be one Logos; but one God plus one divine Word, on the face of it, makes two divine beings, both of whom are to receive worship. One feels that Eusebius can be charged with ditheism as well as subordinationism on the basis of the rhetorical and loose expressions of the Theophania. However, the ambiguity of his language is reflected in the fact that when Samuel Lee published the new discovery in the last century, he expressed the conviction that it would finally clear Eusebius of the charge of Arianism.

Eusebius' prime interest, however, was not the niceties of philosophical doctrine; he was no exact metaphysician, but an apologist. He felt that the most compelling argument for the truth of Christianity was its paramount success. As Constantine had triumphed, Eusebius had become more and more eloquent on this theme, encouraging his readers to step on the bandwagon of the triumphant Church with its magnificent imperially-supported new buildings and multitudinous congregations.

Here he urges these considerations again. Yet the Theophania also shows that Christianity's early success was in Eusebius' eyes equally impressive: if Christianity was a massive hoax perpetrated by the disciples of a false magician, how could it have survived as a pure philosophy requiring abstemious and sacrificial behaviour from its adherents? How could illiterate syriac-speaking rustics have pulled off such a hoax on the sophisticated Graeco-Roman world? Why should people be prepared to die for something they knew to be false? Even contemporary martyrs were a powerful testimony to the effects of the Christian Gospel.

Eusebius' major, indeed all-pervading, apologetic theme is an appeal to the evidence of God's providence. For him, the Logos is the rational and providential principle of creation. He contrasts Christianity with both atheism and polytheism on the grounds that it provides a rational account of the universe and of human history. In Eusebius' eyes, monarchy and monotheism go together. While polytheism reigned, the world was fragmented into many kingdoms; but now 'two great Powers sprung fully up, as (it were) out of one stream; and they gave peace to all, ...: (namely) the Roman Empire ... and the Power of the Saviour of all...' The coincidence of the incarnation and the Pax Romana remained for him the most telling proof of God's providence, and he saw the conversion of Constantine as the natural fulfilment of what had gone before.

One of the most interesting aspects of the discovery of this work has been the question it has raised about the relationship between Eusebius and Athanasius. Some of the apologetic arguments used in the Theophania are so close to those used by Athanasius in the two-volume work Contra Gentes-De Incarnatione that some kind of dependence seems necessary. Now Eusebius wrote this work as an old and respected scholar-bishop in the 330's; Athanasius was the brash young Patriarch of Alexandria who was about to be condemned for all manner of crimes at the Council of Tyre in 335, at which the chairman would be Eusebius. It seems hardly likely, then, that Eusebius would use the work of Athanasius, quite apart from the fact that the Theophania fits so well as the culmination of Eusebius' apologetic activities. Yet traditionally scholarship had dated Athanasius' De Incarnatione to the early years of his life, believing that because it never mentions Arius or his doctrines, it must pre-date the Council of Nicaea in 325. A number of solutions have been proposed for this puzzle: either Athanasius had picked up Eusebius' ideas as a student and then wrote them up in this form before Eusebius did himself; or the arguments simply belong to a common apologetic tradition, in spite of the prima facie impression of dependence; or we must reconsider the date of Athanasius' work. The last seems the most promising course. It seems quite plausible to suggest that Athanasius wrote his apologetic work while in exile in the 330's, basing his work on Eusebius, but showing that Eusebius' own arguments led to rather different conclusions about the nature of the Logos. There may be veiled criticism of the Arian position in some of Athanasius' turns of phrase, though he probably felt that direct attack was unsuitable in an apologetic work, and

his hidden target may well have been Eusebius, rather than the arch-heretic himself. Certainly the two works, though similar, reflect fundamentally different soteriological presuppositions: where Eusebius concentrated on revelation, monotheism and morality being of prime importance to him, Athanasius moved on to explore ideas of redemption and re-creation, emphasising the theme of 'deification' - θεοποίησις.

Text S.Lee, Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, on the Theophania, or Divine Manifestation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A Syriac version edited from a manuscript recently discovered. (London 1842)

Translation S.Lee, Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, on the Theophania, etc. translated into English with notes (Cambridge 1843)

2. Athanasius

Athanasius' Festal Letters, or at least an index to them and the text of about twenty, were discovered during the last century in the same Syriac collection as the Theophania. It had become the custom for the Patriarch of Alexandria to write to his suffragans informing them each year of the correct date to celebrate Easter. The index shows that Athanasius did so for almost every year of his episcopate, the few exceptions being during his periods of exile. Prior to their discovery, the existence of these letters was known from Jerome, and from a few quotations which survived in Greek. However, the extensive Syriac evidence was an important new source of information, chiefly because it provided reliable chronological data concerning Athanasius' life. The letters themselves showed that the Lent fast was only beginning to become usual in Egypt during this period, and they were a useful addition to our knowledge of Athanasius' pastoral style. They cover a variety of topics: the celebration of festivals, the meaning of the Christian Passover, fasting and observances, ethics, warnings against heretics, and so on, all backed up with scriptural texts. This Syriac corpus breaks off well before the famous Letter 39 concerning the canon of scriptures; a long Syriac fragment was found elsewhere, but it was already known in a Greek fragment, and the fullest version has been discovered in Coptic. More recently, Coptic versions of further letters have been published. (Ed. L.Th.Lefort, C.S.C.O. 150, Louvain 1955).

Text W.Cureton, The Festal Letters of Athanasius (London 1848)

Translation Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series, Vol. IV

A Syriac Sixth Century manuscript in the Vatican is one of the few witnesses to the Short Recension of the De Incarnatione. The puzzling existence of two different versions of Athanasius' most famous work was first noticed by J.Lebon, and subsequently R.P.Casey studied the textual tradition of the less-known Short Recension: see G.J.Ryan and R.P.Casey, The De Incarnatione of Athanasius 2 vols. Studies and Documents 14 (London and Philadelphia 1945-6).

Most investigators have concluded that Athanasius, or one of his immediate circle, was responsible for abbreviating the originally longer text, but the question of priority is still far from settled.

There has been considerable controversy over Athanasius' work On Virginity, many regarding the Greek treatise under that title as spurious. However, British Museum Codex 14607 contains a large Syriac fragment of a treatise on this subject, and also a letter to 'virgins who went to Jerusalem to pray and returned', both attributed to Athanasius. It is likely that both are genuine. See J.Lebon, 'Athanasiana Syriaca I', Muséon 40 (1927) 209-218, & II, Muséon 41 (1928) 170-88. He gives the Syriac text and a French translation.

Among the Syriac manuscripts in the British Museum has appeared a whole corpus of Athanasius' writings, his most important treatises grouped together with several Pseudo-Athanasian works, including certain notorious Apollinarian forgeries (see note below). This collection forms the basis of a new Syriac version of Athanasius' work being published by C.S.C.O. (though other manuscripts are also used to make the collection as complete as possible). Since a good critical edition of Athanasius' works in Greek is not yet available for the vast majority of his works, this will probably make a valuable contribution to the whole matter of establishing the text of Athanasius' writings. Caution will be necessary, however; for the editor, R.W. Thomson, drew attention in 1963 to the fact that the Syriac Athanasian Corpus is found in a Chalcedonian manuscript (British Museum Oriental 8606) in which deliberate alterations of a tendentious and dogmatic nature have been made. His study of the manuscript is particularly interesting (in Biblical and Patristic Studies for R.P.Casey, ed. J.N. Birdsall and R.W.Thomson). He noted that the ten works were not all translated by the same scribe, and had been taken from originals (either separate or already collected together) found in the Cathedral treasury in Edessa in 723 AD by the scribe Gabriel. The manuscripts he used were then regarded as 'old'. Now in the early seventh century the cathedral had been in the hands of the Jacobites - they were dispossessed by Heraclius in 629. It was clearly in the subsequent period that phrases of a Chalcedonian tendency were added to these texts, either by Gabriel himself, though this seems unlikely, or by one of his fellow-Melkites (the nickname for the Chalcedonian supporters of the Byzantine Emperor).

Text and translation R.W.Thomson, Athanasiana Syriaca I-IV (Louvain 1965.-67, -72, -77)

Note on Apollinarian Forgeries

The Apollinarians circulated a number of treatises under false names, and took in many influential people. Treatises under the name of Athanasius were actually the source of several famous Monophysite slogans which were first given currency by Cyril of Alexandria. Most of the forgeries found in Syriac are also known in Greek, but it may be of interest to note that the Syriac texts were collected and published by J.Flemming and H.Lietzmann, Apollinaristische Schriften Syrisch (Berlin 1904).

"See, my brethren, if the latter part of this ancient book has been cut off, and has perished together with that (with) which its writer closed and completed it; it was thus written at its end, viz. that 'This book was written in the city of Edessa of Mesopotamia, by the hands of a man named Jacob, in the year seven hundred and twenty and three, (and) was completed in the month of the latter Teshrin.' And, just as that which was written there, I have also written here without addition. And the things which are here, I wrote in the year 1398, in the era of the Greeks."

Lee calculated that the note was written in AD 1086, and the original manuscript in AD 411, a mere 70-80 years after Eusebius composed the work. He realised that many would regard as preposterous the claim that the manuscript was then 1432 years old, and he went to great length in the preface to argue its plausibility. When the manuscript reached the British Museum, Cureton was able to confirm its ancient date on the basis of scientific study of all the codices.

That fact we learn from Cureton's preface to his edition of Athanasius' Festal Letters, where the sequel to Lee's story can be found. Among Tattam's manuscripts Cureton had discovered the Festal Letters, sadly incomplete, but he was preparing them for publication assuming that, according to the terms of the deal, the entire library had been sold to Tattam by the monks. However, Tattam had dealt through unreliable intermediaries, and had in fact been deceived. By chance, Cureton obtained the services of a certain M. Pacho, an Alexandrian who was returning home from London, and quite innocent of the real situation with regard to the library of the Syrian monastery, commissioned him to obtain any further manuscripts of interest. In July 1847, Cureton received a letter announcing the acquisition of 200 volumes, plus fragments and loose leaves, from the same monastery. Pacho, it seems, had soon unravelled the true state of affairs, settled in the monastery himself for about six weeks, and having gained the trust of the monks, was eventually shown the library. He subsequently made sure that this time the whole lot was handed over, by withholding payment until he was certain, and even getting the Superior 'to publish a sentence of excommunication against anyone of the Brethren who should have withholden any part of this Syriac collection, and did not immediately deliver it over to the person to whom they had consigned all their interest in these manuscripts.'

Cureton's delight can be imagined, though bad moments were still in store for him: 'Another letter, dated from Malta, following a few weeks later, gave me some apprehension. I learnt thereby that M. Pacho, instead of proceeding immediately to England, had determined upon passing through France, and taking Paris in his route; and I was too well acquainted with the zeal of the learned Orientalists of that metropolis, and of the keepers of the Royal Library, not to fear that they might manifest some eagerness to partake in the honour and advantage of possessing a share in one of the most remarkable and important collections

of the writings of antiquity which had even been transported from the east to the west. This diversion of M. Pacho's journey certainly cost me much anxiety: probably it also cost Her Majesty's Treasury some additional pounds sterling.' Still, the manuscripts eventually went to the British Museum.

Cureton quite quickly found more of the Festal Letters, but the manuscripts were in considerable confusion. The monks had clearly not used them much or even cared for them very well, for many generations. 'In the whole collection now in the British Museum, containing portions of considerably more than a thousand distinct volumes, certainly not fifty were found in a complete state upon their arrival; although much labour has subsequently succeeded in collecting and arranging the disjointed and scattered parts of many more.' What Cureton hoped he might discover was the missing bit of the volume containing the Theophania. Let him tell the rest of the story himself:

One by one I untied the bundles, and diligently and eagerly examined their contents. As I opened the fourth I was delighted at recognising two pieces belonging to one of the leaves of this precious book: in the next I found a third. And now, Reader, if thou hast any love for the records of antiquity; if thou feellest any kindred enthusiasm in such pursuits as these; if thou hast ever known the satisfaction of having a dim expectation gradually brightened into reality, and an anxious research rewarded with success - things that but rarely happen to us in this world of disappointment - I leave it to thine own imagination to paint the sensations which I experienced at that moment when loosing the cord of the seventh bundle disclosed to my sight a small fragment of beautiful vellum, in a well-known hand, upon which I read the following words:

[א] אֲנִי עֲשֵׂה בְּחֹמֶתָא דְּהַלְלָא דְּהַלְלָא דְּהַלְלָא
 מִסְּבָּלָא דְּהַלְלָא דְּהַלְלָא דְּהַלְלָא
 דְּהַלְלָא דְּהַלְלָא דְּהַלְלָא
 [א] אֲנִי עֲשֵׂה בְּחֹמֶתָא דְּהַלְלָא דְּהַלְלָא
 [ב] אֲנִי עֲשֵׂה בְּחֹמֶתָא דְּהַלְלָא דְּהַלְלָא

'There are completed in this volume three books - Titus, and Clement, and He of Caesarea. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, now and at all times, and for ever. Amen and Amen. This volume was completed in the month Tishrin the Latter, in the year seven hundred and twenty-three, at Orrhoa, a city of Mesopotamia

No more, indeed, of this inscription remains; but this was enough to repay me for the labour of my research, and to confirm and verify the facts connected with it

Among all the curiosities of literature, I know of none more remarkable than the fate of this matchless volume. Written in the country which was the birth-place of Abraham the Father of the Faithful, and the city whose king was the first sovereign that embraced Christianity (he refers of course to Abgar the Black), in the year of our Lord 411, it was, at a subsequent period, transported to the Valley of the Ascetics in Egypt, probably in AD 931, when two hundred and fifty volumes were collected by Moses of Nisibis during a visit to Bagdad, and presented by him, upon his return, to the monastery of St. Mary Deipara, over which he presided.

In AD 1086 some person, with careful foresight, fearing lest the memorial of the transcription of so valuable, beautiful, and, even at that remote period, so 'ancient a book' should be lost, in order to secure its preservation took the precaution to copy it into the body of the volume. At how much earlier a period the fears which he had anticipated became realized I have no means of ascertaining; but in AD 1837 'the end of the volume had been torn off', and in that state, in AD 1839, it was transferred from the solitude of the African desert to the most frequented city in the world. Three years later, two of its fragments followed the volume to England; and in 1847 I had the gratification of recovering almost all that had been lost, and of restoring to its place in this ancient book the transcriber's own record of the termination of his labours, which, after various fortunes, in Asia, Africa and Europe, has already survived a period of ONE THOUSAND, FOUR HUNDRED, AND THIRTY-SIX YEARS.

by Susan Ashbrook

But the blessed Sergius went out, and arrived at the city on the holy day of Sunday, at dawn. He then went straight to the church; and as the whole city was sitting there after the morning hymns...suddenly at the door of the church there appeared a strange and shocking sight, and all were stunned, seeing an appearance not their own: a hermit was entering, wearing rags patched together from sackcloth and carrying his cross on his shoulder. And he went right in, going straight to the middle of the church without a question, neither speaking nor turning to either side; and as the preacher was standing and speaking he stopped, while astonishment fell upon the crowd, and they looked to see what was the matter. But the holy man, as soon as he reached the chancel, struck his cross upon the step and began to mount. And when he had climbed one or two steps in silence, everyone thought that he was getting ready either to say something or to make a petition to the city or to the bishop. But when he reached the third step where the preacher stood, he flung out his hand, grabbed him by the neck, held him fast and said to him, "Wicked evil man, our Lord commands, 'Do not give what is holy to dogs nor pearls before swine'; why do you speak the words of God before those who deny Him?" And he swung his hand round, punched him, twisted his mouth awry, seized him and threw him down.

(Lives of the Eastern Saints, V)

However unsuspecting one may be, one enters the world of Syriac hagiography to learn two things very quickly. First, the Syrian saint is only too likely to do what one would least expect of a saint; and second, the appearance or form of a 'Saint's Life', the written story called hagiography, has all too often been seen in an oversimplified light.

Take the above passage, for example, from the Life of a certain holy man, Sergius. It was written in the mid-sixth century by a Syrian bishop, John of Ephesus - an ardent Monophysite writing in the midst of severe persecution against the Syrian Monophysites by the Chalcedonian Byzantine government, ruled at that time by the great emperor Justinian I and his wife Theodora. John continues the above narrative with breathless zest, to tell how the blessed Sergius, a champion of the Monophysite cause and a hermit of severe ascetic practice, proceeded on this occasion to rouse the congregation into a full riot. The perfidious (so John tells us) Chalcedonian bishop Abraham of Amida manages to trick Sergius into a back room of the building, where his private thugs (- to be a bishop was no easy matter in these times) succeed in subduing the saint with a thorough beating, before carting him off to a concentration camp in Armenia, run by

tyrannical Chaldeanians for misbehaving Monophysites. John tells us that imprisonment in the deepest of dungeons would be a better fate than confinement to this spot, so grim were the tortures executed by its overseers. But the dauntless Sergius quickly escapes and returns to his native land, to finish his life with characteristic zeal, battling ceaselessly against the enemies of the True Faith (that is to say, the Monophysite cause). John of Ephesus, indeed a humble hagiographer, meekly offers up his inspiring story to his attentive audience, praising the saint and glorifying God.

Now hagiography has always presented a frustrating problem whether taken historically or literarily. An intricately woven blend of fact and legend, it is an historical source of elusive character. Furthermore, hagiography tends to come thickly wrapped in themes of different kinds, and seems to rely on standard formulaic patterns for both content and style - that is, there are standard things that saints seem to say and do. But on closer inspection, one finds that legend and thematic pattern often contain a profound, penetrating truth unobtainable from the official records and documents of a given period; and literature based upon stylistic formulae can often achieve a poignant subtlety with a simple and graceful use of language.

Syriac hagiography stood in a position rich with possibilities, particularly before the Arab conquest in the seventh century, during its period under Roman and especially Byzantine rule (the fourth to the seventh centuries A.D.). Overshadowed by the prerogative of the Greek literature and the all-pervasive Graeco-Roman culture of the Byzantine empire, Syriac nonetheless would not be quelled or subdued as an independent cultural medium (this would happen later, under the influence from many sources - Greek or otherwise - while still remaining firmly grounded in its own realm. To be sure, Syriac was a language vibrant with its own force; thus, for example, it could borrow from Greek a literary format like hagiography and use it as a medium particularly suited to its own linguistic and literary patterns. The Syriac-speaking world, lying geographically at the crossroads of many cultures, maintained an internal vitality that enabled it to provide a continual flow of diverse social, religious, and artistic ideas and forms between various cultures. Unlike its Coptic counterpart in Egypt, however, the Syrian world could offer out as great a wealth in culture as it would borrow. Hagiography, by its very nature, was a sphere especially amenable to such a use.

By way of illustration, let us return to our opening story, its passionate protagonist and devoted author. In fact, the story of Sergius and his master Simeon, is one of a number of short biographies John of Ephesus collected together under the title *The Lives of the Eastern Saints*; the work consists of 58 stories of men and women John himself knew or had met in the course of his career. Most of these stories concern Syriac ascetics living in or around the region of Amida, a frontier city of the Byzantine Empire, near to the

Sassanian Persian borders. While such a work might sound rather localised in its interest and subject, a quick glance at John and his *Lives* gives an immediate sense of the historical and literary trade routes for which Syriac hagiography would find itself providing a major crossroad.

John of Ephesus had been raised in a monastery in Amida from early in his childhood, and later travelled widely among the monastic communities in his area of the empire (the Syrian Orient consisted primarily of the regions of Mesopotamia, Osroene, Syria, and Palestine). Like many Syrians, and especially the ascetics, he was exiled several times during the often fierce Monophysite persecutions, wrought by the Chaldean government of Byzantium. He eventually went to the capital city of Constantinople where he served in the Monophysite refugee camps, and became a spokesman for the persecuted cause in the court of the emperor Justinian. Favoured by the imperial court, he conducted missions into the still pagan areas of Asia Minor and the Syrian Orient on behalf of Justinian, but finally, in the reign of Justin II, was banished for the last time because of his religious views. It was in the course of these ex-peniences that he encountered the people later enshrined in his *Lives*, and their stories sharply reflect these surrounding circumstances.

While individual pieces from the *Lives* may resemble simple devotional exercises in the writing of piety, it is when one looks at the work as a whole that the extent of its insights into the sixth century Byzantine Empire can be seen. On the one hand, John is presenting contemporary evidence of the Monophysite persecutions, the eastern policies of the Byzantine Empire at the height of its glory, and an inside picture of the Byzantine imperial court. Moreover, he does so from the vantage point of a persecuted 'heretic', as opposed to the views traditionally presented and taught with the hindsight of Chalcedonian orthodoxy (on which we have all been raised, knowingly or otherwise). His attitude towards the empire, then, is highly valuable in serving to add balance to a picture often distorted through 'orthodox' bias.

On the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, John offers a piercing portrait of ordinary life in a remote area of the sixth century world - for if official historians rarely offer such a picture, hagiography does more commonly portray the life of the peasant and of the poor with dignified affinity. In John's *Lives* a very distinct picture emerges of a society and culture essentially untouched by the Graeco-Roman culture of Byzantium, but where the real meanings and implications of imperial decrees, laws, and policies are everywhere in evidence. These villages felt no loyalty or affection for the empire, and in some places were so remote as to be indifferent, even oblivious, to its power. Persecutions were wrought against them by Persians as well as Byzantines, and barbarian invasions also took place in this period; Armenians and Egyptians offered spiritual comradeship;

(pre-Islamic) Arabs, Turks, and even the King of Aethiopia occasionally provided uncertain asylum or support. The suffering of villager and peasant incurred in these events is documented with an immediate intimacy and tenderness.

It is firmly in the midst of these circumstances that John's ascetics are to be found, and he paints a vibrant scene of an asceticism that has become urban, found no longer in the desert, but in village, town, and city. Indeed, by the sixth century, asceticism had become a potent political force, one which the imperial government either had to enlist into its own service or seriously contend with. Asceticism as well as its adoring public had in fact grown up: where once the holy man or woman had been approached to perform intercessory prayers, healings (miraculous or otherwise), and exorcisms, now they also functioned as intermediaries between the common populace and the coldly bureaucratic, rigidly exacting government. Thus they were found handling land disputes, civil actions, divorce proceedings, matters of trade, and above all, difficulties arising from taxation or oppressive landowners; the ascetics drew no limits to their area of jurisdiction or influence, and often dealt directly with high officials - even the emperor himself would consult a venerated ascetic, be it for policies domestic or foreign. John's Lives present a diverse (and, at times, amusing) portrait of the saint at work in society, and the kind of impact such an ascetic role had both on the 'real world' and on the spiritual one.

As an historical document, then, John's work clearly offers much to explore. But its content cannot be severed from its form, and its function as literature raises questions of an equally absorbing nature. The Lives of the Eastern Saints was composed in Syriac at a time when Syriac was a major second language of the Byzantine Empire, and the lingua franca of the east. Nonetheless, John could have reached a far wider audience had he chosen to write in Greek, which, being bilingual, he no doubt could have done; indeed, so infiltrated by Greek syntax and vocabulary is his Syriac that one wonders in which language he was thinking. However, the majority of the Monophysite population was Syrian, and most Syrians were Monophysite. In a period of intense persecution, a revitalised ideology of Christian martyrdom was strongly present in the east. The impact of John's Lives as positive Monophysite propaganda raises intriguing considerations.

Furthermore, the Lives represents a major link in a literary genre found primarily in Greek. While hagiography had become highly developed literarily, as a form of exalting and exalted biography, a few individuals - such as Palladius in his Lausiac History, Theodoret in his Historia Religiosa, and later John Moschus in his Spiritual Meadow (all composed in Greek) - chose a much less formal, more personally intimate form of hagiography. These wrote accounts of ascetics in their own regions, and presented their characters through

vignettes rather than full-length biographies. It is this literary mode that John of Ephesus chose for the purpose of making known the piety and strength of asceticism in a remote area of the Syrian Orient. One must, consequently, look to the influences and purposes interacting among the works of this particular mode.

If I am in danger of presenting John of Ephesus as the definitive Syriac hagiographer, let me hasten to point out that he is but one of many (and hardly the best in literary terms, writing as he does in mangled half-Greek Syriac), although a particularly fascinating one, to be sure. However, if we look again at some of the cultural cross-currents written into John's Lives, we may perhaps begin to sketch a wider context for Syriac hagiography in the pre-Arab period.

Immediately striking is the relationship between Syriac and Greek. With Greek as the primary language of Christian thought and literature, further strengthened by its political place as the language of the one true Christian Empire - that of Byzantium, it was in relation to Greek that the early Christian world would interact from the Latin West deep into the Orient. As Syriac had long been the common tongue of the east, its constant interaction with Greek fostered its role as a major mediator between different Christian peoples. Thus, amidst frequent examples of the many opportunities open to and situations dependent upon the Syrian who was also learned in Greek, John of Ephesus makes it clear that in the sixth century the Armenian striving for access into the cultural élite of Byzantine society must be well-educated in both Greek and Syriac, the Armenian language not yet having achieved a stature of its own. In fact, the Syrian Orient and Armenia had a very intricate relationship of their own; geographical neighbours, their histories were tightly intertwined. It was the Syrians who, in the fifth century, had worked with Armenian scholars to devise an Armenian alphabet and establish the foundations of an Armenian literature; the earliest Armenian works were translations of Syriac translations of Greek (the Bible and Eusebius of Caesarea's Ecclesiastical History, among others)! John of Ephesus was not the only Syriac hagiographer whose characters provided access for an outside audience into Armenia, its society and Christian experience.

Perhaps more immediately relevant for the Byzantine world was the interaction of the Syrian Orient with Egypt. John of Ephesus points to the major areas of common influence in his vivid descriptions of the Syrian Monophysite ascetics, exiled from their own regions, who fled to the Egyptian desert for refuge. The Copts, like the Syrians, were predominantly Monophysite - cherishing their tradition of Cyril of Alexandria, the fifth century theologian whose thought was crucial to the conflict at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Indeed, the theological alliance between the Syrian and Coptic Monophysites was of critical importance for the rise of the Monophysite movement, its stormy period of dissent within the orthodox body, and the actions in

the course of the sixth century eventually leading to an irrevocable split into separate churches - the Coptic and Syrian Monophysites each forming their own independent ecclesiastical structures and bodies, irreconcilable with the imperial Chalcedonian 'Orthodox' church of the Byzantines. The development is well demonstrated in Syriac hagiography of the time, as are the roles of both Coptic and Syrian leaders.

John of Ephesus writes at the height of the Monophysite struggle, and despite his revolutionary zeal, is perhaps unconscious of the fact that much of the activity by ascetics and clergy he relates was directly responsible for the severance of the churches. As in John's case, many of our most important documents for this period of history survive in the Syriac sources, and Syriac translations of Greek sources destroyed by Chalcedonians or now otherwise lost. Syriac hagiography of Monophysite leaders provides work of fundamental concern here, both in its own right and by translation. Thus, for example, the Syriac Life of John of Tella, written by the monk Elias, which became a great classic of Syriac literature - a model of hagiography and of Syriac style; and the Greek Lives of Peter the Iberian by John Rufus, and two of Severus of Antioch, one by Zacharias Scholasticus and the other by John of Beth-Aphthonia, where the originals have disappeared and the Syriac recensions provide the most accurate records of these great Monophysite bishops.

Apart from theological issues, however, and the allied actions of the Syrians and Copts, Egypt and the Syrian Orient were bound in a relationship of mutual admiration and respect for their independent but equally influential ascetic movements. Egypt, often viewed as the cradle of monasticism, had gained an early prerogative throughout the Christian world, and the Syrians too had acknowledged such a role with early translations from the Greek stories and lives of the Egyptian Desert Fathers, their 'sayings' (the *Apophthegmata*), and of Palladius' *Lausiac History* (many of these were later collected and re-edited in the early seventh century by the Syrian monk Anan-Isho, under the collective title *The Paradise of the Holy Fathers*). Moreover, it became common practice in Syrian hagiography to claim that a saint was somehow linked with Egypt - for example, had received 'training' there - even if this was not the case, simply to add validity or prestige to the Life. It is not surprising, then, that the descriptions by John of Ephesus of the refugee monastic settlements in the Egyptian desert foreshadow the foundation of a Syrian monastery in Scetis, one of the most revered ascetic centres of Egypt.

John of Ephesus again points to a further source for the wellsprings of Syriac hagiography in his stories indicating Syrian contact further to the east. Sassanian Persia, especially, was as imminently present for the Syrians as were the Byzantines, ruling as it did the eastern realms of the Syrian world. John describes the sometimes harrowingly dangerous contact between the Syrian Christians

in Persian territory with their Byzantine counterparts; such interaction was often occasion for the trading of legends on both sides for mutual inspiration, found in Syriac hagiography such as the very popular legends of the Persian martyrs, gathered between the fourth and seventh centuries. Persia, too, offered its own cultural cross-currents, and the harsh tones of its Zoroastrian dualities, along with the savage ascetic traits of the Hindu Brahmins in India, would make their impact on Syrian asceticism while echoing behind its hagiography.

Asceticism - a fundamental theme throughout Syriac hagiography, as in John of Ephesus - provided a major form of influence that the Syrian Orient in its own right would exert outward. One sees clearly here that Syriac was not simply conveying cultural influences between different peoples, but also offering forth its own wealth of experience. In fact, the ascetic movement in the Syrian Orient had arisen independently and autonomously at about the same time as Egypt's, and although their movements took very different forms and directions, both stood as renowned and highly influential modes of Christian witness, whose fame - often through the medium of hagiography - spread far beyond their own lands. The Syrian movement, however, gained special attention by its extreme harshness, and the bizarre forms of its practice. With its obscure and wild anchoritic beginnings so lyrically praised in the fourth century by the great poet Ephrem Syrus, Syrian asceticism made its mark through the use of chains, cages, and various other wooden or iron devices, and the common practice of spending years living in a tree or standing on a pillar exposed to the elements. These developments were ardently described by Theodoret of Cyrrhus in his *Historia Religiosa*, a collection of lives concerning the ascetics in the regions lying around Antioch. Written in Greek to expose the wonders of the Syrian ascetics to the wider Byzantine world, Theodoret's work must nonetheless be considered as Syriac hagiography: not only were its subjects Syrian, but so too was its author, although in 'Greek dress'.

It was these Syrian virtuosos of the Perfect Life who primarily brought about the re-emergence of asceticism into society, rather than continuing its practice as a life of absolute withdrawal; this soon led to the ascetic's acquisition of political power throughout the Byzantine Empire, evidenced in countless other sources besides John of Ephesus. The giant figure who dominated this tradition across the Christian expanse was the greatest of all Syrian saints, Simeon the Stylite. Simeon's ascetic career in the fifth century was noteworthy and scandalously tortuous from its commencement, and its culmination lay in the forty years (or thereabouts) that he stood on a very high pillar in the wilderness outside Antioch. So awed were the masses by his ascetic prowess and so far did his fame spread, that Simeon's days and nights on his pillar were spent rigorously divided between various ascetic exercises (e.g. prayers, genuflections), answering innumerable petitions and settling disputes for the crowds who flocked to his presence with suits of every kind, legal and otherwise, and addressing them on matters of faith. Indeed, the crowds

came in such numbers that Simeon had to raise his pillar successively higher over the years in an effort to remain aloof from the world. A vivid eyewitness account was recorded by Theodoret in the *Historia Religiosa*, and the story was further popularised in the Byzantine world by an elaborate Greek life claiming to have been written by a disciple of the saint called Antony; the Syrians, of course, had an excellent life of their own, which inspired many versions in other languages.

Simeon's example not only heralded a new 'trend' for asceticism - imitators were found as far west as Gaul - but also a new role, manifestly exalted in hagiography. His immediate successor Daniel, a Syrian too ambitious to remain in his own territory, set up his pillar - complete with interpreter - outside Constantinople, there to advise emperors and kings as well as the common populace. Daniel's Greek life articulates well the fusion of religious and worldly power contained in the holy man or woman, and the reader is aware here as in other hagiography that the wider Christian domain was not only inspired by tales of Syrian saints, but in many instances adopted Syrian practices - if not always in an equally extreme manner. In Syrian works such as that by John of Ephesus, one sees the tensions within Syrian asceticism between its own traditional severity, and efforts to allow the influence of more moderate practices from Egypt and Asia Minor.

But it was more than the genuinely historical Syrian saint or the propaganda of Syrian asceticism that captivated the Byzantine imagination. Many Syrian legends were borrowed into Greek - and from there elsewhere - sometimes with such vigor that scholars have mistakenly assumed the story to have originated in Greek, as with the Edessan legend of Euphemia and the Goths, a story serving to glorify the cults of the first Christian martyrs at Edessa. The legend of Sergius and Bacchus, Roman soldiers martyred in Syria under the emperor Maximian, was widely honoured in the Orient, and quickly gained great following in the west; the Greeks evolved their own legends about them, and dedicated a number of churches in their honour. Similarly, the legendary physicians Cosmas and Damian (who in fact are likely to have been Arabs), were received with an enthusiasm so great that their legend was transplanted almost wholesale into territories farther west, its Syrian origins well obscured.

One must not, however, discount the movement and growth of legends as a matter of popular rather than historical interest. For in the themes that legends gathered unto themselves as they grew and expanded, one may seek a deeper insight into the thought world which nurtured their development. So in the case of Alexis the Man of God, originally an unnamed Syrian saint who came to be called Alexis as his story spread west, and whose Syrian tale was eventually translated into all the European languages as well as Slavic tongues, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, and Arabic. The Man of God had appealed to romantic imagination with the simple yet profound events of his story: fleeing from his wealthy Christian family for a life

of pure ascetic devotion, Alexis had lived out his chosen profession underneath their very eyes, and yet they had never recognised their long lost son in the austere and humble holy man they saw. The story clearly provides an apt illustration of the gospels' injunction to abandon even one's family in order to pursue Christ more perfectly. Even further, it shines with the confidence that absolute Christian devotion will completely transform and make new the believer; and so total will be the change that is wrought, it will render the 'new person' unrecognisable. To a world whose reality was all too oppressive, such a vision scarcely appeared superfluous.

Also captivating was the legend of Pelagia, a courtesan of Antioch whose conversion led to her adoption of a disguised life as a monk, in which she gained great renown for her ascetic discipline and worked many miracles. While enchantingly told in Syriac, the story provided inspiration for numerous other legends of holy women in Christian literature, using this popular 'transvestite' motif. This theme, too, speaks to the notion of transformation through faith, but it carries deeper implications; for it makes literal the frequently heard metaphor of the early church, that the woman who truly believes transcends the weaknesses of her own sex and rises to the stature of men. It is a theme betraying much in the early church's ideology of women and sanctity.

And so the list of widespread Syrian legends and their off-spring goes on, revealing time and again stories and ideas born of and articulated by Syrian roots.

In his introduction to *The Lives of the Eastern Saints*, John of Ephesus states that he writes to make known the good deeds and triumphs of the Lord's holy disciples - those men and women who had excelled in service to their faith. Surely this was the task of hagiography: to inspire and instruct the populace as a whole, peasant or aristocrat, to seek a more perfect life. In the process, John and other Syrian hagiographers reveal a world at once remote and cosmopolitan, an experience both sheltered and involved - deeply rooted in its own heritage and intricately in touch with the world beyond its confines. In the few examples here given, I have simply mentioned some of the elements most strikingly at play in the sphere of Syriac hagiography. But one may be sure, if Syriac hagiography allowed a fluid interchange of cultures and experiences, it did so in an even exchange of goods, trading with ample wealth of its own.

As a field of study, moreover, Syriac hagiography remains very much an open market of rich offerings, sadly underworked in comparison with its sister, Greek hagiography. There is, in particular, a great need for critical and interpretative study of Syriac hagiography, its legends and themes, beyond the basic work of establishing saints and their cults as has traditionally been done; and the questions of its literary style - its relation to Greek hagiography, its own literary

origins and development, and the possibility of stylistic influences - have been left unanswered far too long. There is much to be had here, whether for the church historian, the social historian, the literary critic, or the folklorist. One never knows what one may find.

A Brief List of Suggested Readings

Basic historical orientation is always helpful, and a good introduction will be found in Philip K. Hitti, History of Syria (London 1951). Two fundamental areas of background for Syriac hagiography are asceticism and the Monophysite movement; for the first, S.P. Brock, "Early Syrian Asceticism", Numen XX (1973) 1-19 lucidly lays the foundations, and Arthur Vööbus, History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient in 2 Vols. (Louvain 1958) provides a comprehensive study up to the sixth century. On the second, see W.H.C. Frend, The Rise of the Monophysite Movement (Cambridge 1972), and W.A. Wigram, The Separation of the Monophysites (London 1923).

General introductions to hagiography (not simply Syriac) are René Aigrain, L'Hagiographie: ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire (Paris 1953), and, especially, the classic H. Delehaye, The Legends of the Saints, English translation by Donald Atwater (New York 1962), as well as others by Delehaye. For Syriac hagiography, one is wise to begin with Paul Peeters, Orient et Byzance: Le Tréfonds Oriental de L'Hagiographie Byzantine, Subsidia Hagiographica 26 (Bruxelles 1950). Particular Syriac legends are treated, for example, in F.C. Burkitt, Euphemia and the Goth with the Acts of the Martyrdom of the Confessors of Edessa (London 1913); A. Amiaud, La Légende Syriaque de Saint Alexis, L'Homme de Dieu (Paris 1889); and A. Smith-Lewis, Select Narrations of Holy Women in Studia Sinaitica IX-X (London 1900).

For the importance of hagiography as an historical source there are two essential articles: Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity", Journal of Roman Studies LXI (1971) 80-101; and E. Patlagean, "À Byzance: ancienne hagiographie et histoire sociale", Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations XXIII (1968) 106-26.

Further reading may be sought out in the bibliographical aids suggested by S. Brock above.

by Peter Jerrome

These short notes owe a good deal to my recollection of Professor Stein's Targum class at University College London in the mid-sixties. He would always encourage his students to think for themselves and make their own initial assessment of Targumic changes and the reasons for them. I hope these annotations will on their very limited scale encourage others to do the same. To observe the preoccupations of the Targumic 'writers' and the changes they feel necessary in rendering the Hebrew scriptures into the Aramaic vernacular is to see a familiar text with new eyes.

The later 'official' versions like Onkelos or Pseudo-Jonathan are best seen as written versions founded on ancient oral interpretations rather than as being essentially oral; but in origin the Targumim were synagogue renderings into Aramaic of the Hebrew text, oral and not written and in no way a rival or alternative to the sacred text with which they were read in conjunction. The purpose of the meturgeman or translator was to interpret and bring alive for the Aramaic-speaking congregation the Hebrew text, and to help the congregation understand that text aright. This the meturgeman did extempore; he did not rely on written notes although of course he might be mindful of older interpretative traditions.

A printed rabbinic bible - often containing simply one book of the Pentateuch in a single volume - is probably the best work book for the beginner because it will give in synoptic form the Hebrew text, Onkelos, Pseudo-Jonathan and the fragmentary Targum without continual reference to different volumes. The undoubted textual vagaries of these printed versions need not disconcert in the initial stages. The following notes simply use such an ordinary printed text and try to give an account of some of the more characteristic changes to be encountered in the Targumim and on occasion in the Septuagint (G). For the text of G I have used the two-volume edition by Rahlfs. I have also tried to bring in to some extent the Aramaic of the Targumim, not too difficult for someone with a working knowledge of classical Hebrew, or ideally a little Syriac.

More serious study needs to take account of such aids as the recently discovered Neofiti Targum to the entire Pentateuch, now sumptuously published in five volumes by A. Diez Macho, and the fine edition of Targum Onkelos by Sperber. There are now so many general introductions to the Targumim that it seems otiose here to categorise in detail the different versions. The student might be better advised to form his own conclusions about Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan and then compare his impressions with a good introductory account like that to be found in John Bowker: The Targums and Rabbinic Literature (1969) pp. 16-28. This book is a useful introduction to Targumic versions of the Pentateuch and has a translation and notes on selected portions of Genesis. It does not however introduce the beginner to the Aramaic language and phraseology of the Targumim, for which one

may use W.B. Stevenson's Grammar of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic (Oxford 1924/62) and C.R. Brown, An Aramaic Method (New York 1884/93). The best introduction to Targumic literature in general remains that of R. le Déaut, Introduction à la Littérature Targumique (Rome 1966), although unfortunately only the first part of this work has yet appeared. Le Déaut also deals with the Targumim to the Prophets and to the Hagiographa.

Among versions with accompanying translations there is the edition of the Targum of Isaiah by J.F. Stenning (1949) with supralinear pointing, and the edition of the Targum of Ruth by E. Levine (*Analecta Biblica* 58 1973). The latter writer has also produced similar works on the Targumim to Lamentations and to Jonah. For Chronicles, a fascinating but very late and uncharacteristic version, there is a recent edition by R. le Déaut and J. Robert with Aramaic text, glossary and translation into French. Recently reprinted is the mid-nineteenth century translation of the Pentateuchal Targumim by J.W. Etheridge. This version was intended to facilitate private study of the Targumim and is often disconcertingly literal. It is helpful but needs to be used with some care.

There follow some representative passages from the earlier chapters of Exodus, mainly concerning the burning bush and the plagues. I have not attempted to draw out all the possibilities of Targumic interpretation in any given passage - simply to draw attention to points of interest. The student can later if he wishes see how the Neofiti version compares.

- (1) Exodus 2.12: Moses strikes the Egyptian - concern for the reputation of Moses

According to the Massoretic text (M) Moses, seeing an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of Moses' own people, struck the Egyptian down and hid the body in the sand. G and Onkelos translate as M.

Pseudo-Jonathan, however, mindful of Moses' reputation, seeks to alleviate the matter-of-factness of the Hebrew:

And Moses understood in the wisdom of his mind and discerned through all generations and behold there would not arise from that Egyptian a proselyte or any that would make repentance from (among) his descendants and he struck the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

Pseudo-Jonathan did not apparently concern himself with the somewhat abstruse theological problems his expansion might entail!

- (2) Ex. 2.21: 'And Moses was content' - again concern for the reputation of Moses

According to M Moses stayed willingly with the priest of Midian. But should he have been so willing? Midian though a kindred people (Gen. 25.2) were not worshippers of Yahweh. Onk. again translates the text as it stands but note G $\kappa\alpha\tau\omega\kappa\iota\sigma\theta\eta$ 'he dwelt', avoiding the positive statement of willingness.

Ps.-Jon. has a long explanatory addition dealing with Moses being cast into a pit and fed secretly by Zipporah the priest's daughter. After ten years he is freed and shown the wondrous rod with which he is destined to cleave the Red Sea and bring water from the rock. Only then, explains Ps.-Jon., was he prepared willingly to dwell with the priest of Midian.

- (3) Ex. 2.25: 'And God knew...' - a cryptic Hebrew text and an anti-anthropomorphism

According to M God saw the people of Israel and knew. The Revised Standard Version adds 'their condition' to clarify. The text, though very abrupt, is not obscure. Two points concerned the meturgeman here: the cryptic nature of the final clause, and more particularly the imputation to God of human sense-perception which could lead the unwary to draw false conclusions about his person and being. Of all Targumic changes 'anti-anthropomorphism' is the most characteristic and occurs time and again in various guises.

So Onk. paraphrastically:

And there was revealed before the Lord the affliction of the children of Israel and the Lord gave order by his Memra to redeem them.

The Lord's Memra or Word is hardly in the Targumim a personalized being at all - more a surrogate for God and a means of avoiding anthropomorphism in cases like this (cf. R.E. Brown: Gospel according to John, Anchor Bible, I pp. 523-4).

Onk. thus avoids the anthropomorphism and expands the cryptic וַיֵּדַע . Ps.-Jon. addresses himself to the same problems although differently in detail.

- (4) Ex. 3.1: Moses comes to Horeb, the mountain of God - a Targumic clarification

$\text{וַיָּבֹא אֶל-הַר הַאֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה בַּה}$ M

But is there just one mountain of God, so that all other mountains

fall outside his sovereignty? Onk. removes all misunderstanding:

וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-כָּל-אֶרֶץ-מִצְרָיִם
'And he came to the mountain that had revealed upon it the glory of the Lord - to Moreh.'

Ps.-Jon. is very similar.

- (5) Ex. 3.3: Moses turns aside to look at the burning bush - a correction to avoid a misleading impression

M נִצַּח-הַבֹּשֶׂת . נִצַּח has the basic meaning 'turn aside' which could be seen as inappropriate in this context. Onk. and Ps.-Jon. both change to the neutral root נָצַח .

Note that the Fragmentary Targum in describing the bush adds the explanatory adjective בֹּשֶׂת, a participle pointed either as lthpe'el or Appl'el from בָּשַׁת 'to be green, moist', thus: 'the bush (remained) succulent and not burned'.

- (6) Ex. 3.4: God sees Moses and calls to him from the bush - some inconsistent anti-anthropomorphisms

We might well expect some change in the anthropomorphic verbs in M but Onk. simply translates:

וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אֵל
'And the Lord saw... and called him...'

Ps.-Jon. changes the first verb but not the second:

וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אֵל וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו
'And it was revealed before the Lord... and the Lord called him...'

Anti-anthropomorphic changes while very frequent are by no means consistent.

- (7) Ex. 4.6: The leprous hand of Moses - some Targumic variations.

Moses is told to put his hand into his bosom. When he withdraws it, it is leprous like snow (M: אֲדָמָה כְּשֶׁנֶּחֶד). Onk. renders:

אֲדָמָה כְּשֶׁנֶּחֶד וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אֵל וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו
'and behold his hand was leprous, white as snow' - avoiding express mention of leprosy; so also G ('and his hand became as snow'), and Philo similarly. Ps.-Jon. however renders:

אֲדָמָה כְּשֶׁנֶּחֶד וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אֵל וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו

'and behold his hand was leprous, white as snow' - is a participle having the technical meaning 'leprous' i.e. declared leprous after being looked up (נָסַח).

- (8) Ex. 4.10: Moses' lack of eloquence - Targumic attitudes to Moses' diffidence as a speaker

M: מִי אֲנִי וְאֵלֶּיךָ אֵל
'For I am heavy (RSV slow) of mouth and heavy of tongue'

Onk.'s rendering changes the meaning entirely:

אֲנִי מִי אֲנִי וְאֵלֶּיךָ אֵל
'For I am rare of speech and deep of tongue'

- (9) Ex. 4.17: Moses' rod - a Greek embellishment

Moses is to take into his hand the rod with which he is to do signs in the land of Egypt.

Onk. and Ps.-Jon. translate as M but here G has the explanatory gloss ὅτι ὁ δαίμων ἐστὶν ὄφιν 'that turned into a serpent'.

- (10) Ex. 4.19: Moses can return to Egypt in safety - Ps.-Jon. sees a difficulty in M

According to M all the men who were seeking Moses' life in Egypt were now dead; he could then return without fear.

Onk. as M:

וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אֵל וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו
'Behold they are accounted as dead'

Ps.-Jon. however saw a difficulty: Dathan and Abiram, later opponents of Moses (Numbers 16), were far from dead, so he renders:

וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶת-אֵל וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו
'Behold they are accounted as dead'

- (11) Ex. 5.2: Pharaoh's blasphemous speech - an unedifying outburst is softened

M: וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן
'I will speak to you and to Aaron, saying: "Why do you stand before me, saying: 'I will not do as the word of the Lord'?"'

'And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord that I should listen to his voice?'

G softens the blasphemous nature of the king's outburst by omitting
Κύριος: ὅτι ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς ἰσχυρότατος καὶ ὁ κύριος πάντων αὐτοῦ.

Onk.: וְאֶמַר פֶּרַעֲה

שְׁמָא דִּיךָ לֹא אֶתְגַּלִּי לִי דִּי אֶתְגַּלִּי לִי דִּי אֶתְגַּלִּי לִי

'And Pharaoh said, The name of the Lord has not been revealed to me that I should obey his word.'

For the second offensive clause in this verse ('I do not know the Lord') Onk. again translates 'the name of the Lord has not been revealed to me'. Ps.-Jon. translates the first part of the verse as Onk., but for 'I do not know the Lord' renders: 'I have not found written in the Book of the Angels the name of the Lord, wherefore I do not fear him.'

(12) Ex. 6.16: 'the years of the life of Levi' - a midrash in Ps.-Jon.

M gives the years of the life of Levi as 137 years. Onk. renders as M. Ps.-Jon. also as M but with the additional clause:

עַד דְּהִמְכָּה יְת מֹשֶׁה וְיֵת אַהֲרֹן פְּרִיכִינָא דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

'until he saw Moses and Aaron the deliverers of Israel'

According to Ex. 1.6 Joseph died and all his brethren but the Targum makes it clear that Levi in his longevity was able to see the deliverance wrought by Moses and Aaron. Note the similar expression by Ps.-Jon. at 6.18.

(13) Ex. 7.11: Jannes and Jambres - a midrashic expansion in Ps.-Jon.

In M Pharaoh summons the wise men and the sorcerers and they emulate the miracles wrought by Moses and Aaron. Onk. as M. Ps.-Jon. however has Pharaoh summon the wise men and sorcerers but also the two magicians Jannes and Jambres. These figures are under various names well-known to rabbinic tradition. According to Ps.-Jon. at Ex. 1.15 they had forecast the birth of Moses 'through whom the whole land of Egypt is to be destroyed', and they also figure in rabbinic versions of the Balaam narrative. In the Zadokite document of the Dead Sea Scrolls 'Jannes and his brother' are categorised as raised up by the wiles of Satan to oppose Moses and Aaron who arose by the hand of the Prince of Lights (Damascus Rule V.17-19). Compare also 2 Tim. 3.8 and the extended discussion in M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Analecta Biblica 27) pp. 82-96.

(14) Ex. 7.15: Pharaoh at the water's brink - differing Targumic attitudes to a crux interpretum

According to M Moses is to encounter Pharaoh as he comes out to the water in the morning. Jewish commentators were much exercised as to what Pharaoh was doing by the waters. Onk. however does not speculate or expand but translates quite literally:

הָא נִפְיָן לְמַיָּא

Ps.-Jon. however has:

הָא נִפְיָן לְמַנְטֵר קִנְסָמִים עִילִי מַיָּא הִי כְּאַמְגֻשָּׁא

'as he is coming to observe sorcery upon the waters like a magician (lit. magian)'

Ps.-Jon. thinks that Pharaoh himself took part in the rites of the magicians, the Nile of course being the basis of Egypt's fertility.

The Fragmentary Targum has לְמַתְקִינָה (error for לְמַתְקִירָה)

עַל מַיָּא — i.e. 'to cool himself by the waters' - an entirely different explanation for Pharaoh's early morning activity. More prosaically some medieval commentators thought that the king went to the water simply in order to relieve himself.

(15) Ex. 7.22: The waters of Goshen - Ps.-Jon. sees a difficulty in M

According to 7.20 Moses and Aaron had turned all the waters of the Nile to blood. There were hence no waters left upon which the heathen sorcerers could in their turn wreak their magic arts. Ibn Ezra was aware of the difficulty and suggested that the magicians tampered with the waters under the earth. Onk. simply translates as M. Ps.-Jon. however carries the addition:

וְהִפְכִּי כִּן מַיָּא דְּגֹשֶׁן לְאַדְמָא

'and turned some of the waters of Goshen to blood'

Ps.-Jon. aware of the difficulty has assumed that Moses and Aaron left the waters of the ghetto untouched and that it was these that the magicians were enabled to turn to blood.

(16) Ex. 8.5/9: Moses before Pharaoh - a question of precedence

Moses asks Pharaoh to assign him a time at which he is to entreat deliverance from the plague of frogs. M's הִתְפַּאֵר עָלַי can be paraphrased as lexicon of B.D.B. 'assume the honour over me (to decide when)'. Obviously the meturgeman felt this was a far from satisfactory order of precedence.

G tersely: $\tau\acute{\alpha}\xi\alpha\iota \pi\rho\acute{o}s \mu\epsilon$ - 'appoint me a time'.

Onk.: $\text{לְמַדְּךָ לְעֵלְךָ אֶת־יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ}$

'Ask for yourself power; give me a time'

- avoiding any suggestion that Pharaoh has power unless God give it to him.

Ps.-Jon. thinking along similar lines has:

$\text{וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲנִי וְכָל־בְּרִיֹתַי וְכָל־בְּרִיֹתַי וְכָל־בְּרִיֹתַי}$

'Get yourself praise through me at what time you like'

The Fragmentary Targum is very obscure and conformed here.

(17) Ex. 8.10/14: 'And the land stank' - Onk. makes the meaning plain

For M's $\text{וְהָיָה הָאָרֶץ כְּסִנְיָהּ}$ Onk. has: $\text{וְהָיָה הָאָרֶץ כְּסִנְיָהּ וְכִי־יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה}$

'and they stank over the earth' - it was the frogs that caused the stench, the earth itself was not putrid. But Ps.-Jon. as M.

(18) Ex. 8.15/18: 'This is the finger of God' - a startling anthropomorphism removed

G translates literally.

Onk.: $\text{וְהָיָה הָאָרֶץ כְּסִנְיָהּ וְכִי־יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה}$

'behold it is a stroke from before the Lord'

Ps.-Jon. has a similar but much lengthier paraphrase.

(19) Ex. 9.20: Job in Egypt - Ps.-Jon. particularises a general statement

According to M he who feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses in view of the impending plague of hail.

Onk. is virtually a translation of M. Ps.-Jon. however begins the verse with 'Job who feared the word of the Lord...', thus putting a name to the entirely general statement of M. Job was a byword as one who 'feared the word of the Lord'.

(20) Ex. 9.33: The rain ceases in mid-air - the Targumim enhance a miracle

According to M Moses goes out of the city and stretches forth his hands. Thunder and hail cease and the rain no longer pours upon the earth. Onk. translates the last part of the verse:

$\text{וְהָיָה הָאָרֶץ כְּסִנְיָהּ וְכִי־יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה}$

'the rain that was coming down did not reach the ground!'

Ps.-Jon. is almost identical, but in the first part of the verse renders M's $\text{וְהָיָה הָאָרֶץ כְּסִנְיָהּ}$ ('And Moses went out') as

$\text{וְהָיָה הָאָרֶץ כְּסִנְיָהּ}$

'and Moses and Aaron went out'

In 9.27 both had been mentioned as going to Pharaoh. Both, reasoned the Targum, must have come out!



The title for 1 Corinthians in the Mosul Bible (1887-92). See above, p. 20.

RABBINIC SOURCES FOR THE NON-RABBINIST

by Martin Goodman

Rabbinic Judaism is based on halakha, interpretation of the written law of the Bible, and haggada, commentary on, and illustration of, the Bible narrative. A large corpus of literature of this sort was produced by Jewish rabbis in the first centuries of our era in compilations of ideas originally transmitted orally through the debates of the rabbinical schools. This literature is easily available for study by the theologian and historian, but little of it has been read outside the rabbinical schools until recent years and its potential for the non-rabbinic scholar is only slowly being realised.

The earliest surviving compilation of rabbinic law is the Mishnah, compiled about A.D. 200 in Galilee; some laws not included in that work were gathered slightly later into the Tosefta. Both works have the same intent: the elaboration of detailed regulations governing criminal, civil and religious law. So, for example, the laws preventing work on the Sabbath are specified:

"R. Eliezer says: 'he is culpable that weaves three threads [on the Sabbath] at the beginning [of a web], or a single thread on to a piece already woven'. But the sages say: 'Whether at the beginning or end [of the web] the forbidden quantity is two threads'." (M. Shabb. - i.e. Mishnah tractate Shabbath - 13 : 1). But, most of all, these early works stress the importance of ritual purity (perhaps, with tithing, the main preoccupation of their Pharisaic forbears) (1): hence a discussion on whether fruit can convey impurity:

"Any part [of a fruit] that serves as a handle but not as a protection contracts uncleanness and conveys uncleanness", (M. Uktasin 1 : 1) or on the validity of a ritual immersion pool to cleanse the impure:

"If a man left a tray beneath the water-pipe, and it had a rim, it renders the immersion pool invalid." (M. Mikva'oth 4 : 2)

The Mishnah provided the raw material for the huge commentaries of the Talmudists, in the Jerusalem (or Palestinian) Talmud, compiled about A.D. 400 in Galilee and in the more famous Babylonian Talmud, compiled c. A.D. 500 in Mesopotamia.

Perhaps more accessible at first are the midrashim, the commentations of haggada designed to illustrate the Bible. The earliest ("Tanaitic") midrashim (Mekilta, Sifra and Sifre) comment on the last four books of the Pentateuch and contain a good deal of law similar to that of the Mishnah, but the later midrashim, especially the huge Midrash Rabbah, are full of parables and stories designed to entertain and instruct. So the parable to illustrate Deuteronomy 33:5: "All the tribes of Israel together" compares Israel to a floating house-boat resting on craft bound together with cables: "So long as the boats are tied one to another the house stands, but once the boats drift apart the house stands no more. So for Israel" (Sifre Devarim 336).

Many of these books have been intensively studied for centuries in the rabbinical schools and interpretative works of great scholarship on them abound. But the rabbis have studied the law for practical purposes, to discover a clear ruling for all possible contingencies. Since they believe that the ancient rabbis partook of the divine inspiration of Moses in the handing down of their traditions, they are bound to seek to reconcile conflicting views in the sources wherever possible, rather than investigate what the ancient rabbis in fact intended to say. So one mishnaic passage says: "If a man brought a bill of divorce and lost it but straightway found it again, it remains valid" (M. Gittin 3 : 3), which might conflict with another passage: "If a man found bills of divorce he should not restore them lest the writer may have changed his mind" (M. Baba Metzia 1 : 7). Rabbah reconciles the two passages by importing a new idea: one law applies when camel caravans are known often to pass the place of finding, the other when the place is comparatively deserted! No admission can be made of conflict or change in the law (b. Gittin = Babylonian Talmud, tractate Gittin, 27a).

The earlier (tannaitic) works are written in Mishnaic Hebrew. This is a clear and logical offspring of Biblical Hebrew and seems to have been spoken colloquially in the second century A.D., for a Hebrew papyrus letter survives from the leader of the second Jewish revolt of A.D. 132-135, containing the unliturgical threat:

"I bear witness to the heavens that if any of the Galileans who is with you is maltreated I shall put your feet in irons as I did to Ben 'Aphul". (Discoversies in the Judaean Desert II no. 43 ed. Bénéto etc. OUP 1965). But Hebrew ceased to be widely used outside a liturgical context by the third century A.D. and the later Talmudic texts are all in Aramaic.

Aramaic was the common language of the Middle East, but biblical Aramaic, Syriac and the other local dialects all have their idiosyncracies. Talmudic Aramaic is no exception - it bears the same relation to Syriac as, say, Spanish to Italian, with somewhat different vocabulary and grammar. But the big problem in reading the Talmudic texts lies in their abbreviated modes of expression and convoluted modes of reasoning in commenting on passages from the Mishnah. So, at random, the first comment of tractate 'Gittin' in the Babylonian Talmud on why a messenger bringing a divorce document from abroad has to swear that it was correctly drawn up:

גִּטָּא דְּבִינָא דְּבִינָא דְּבִינָא דְּבִינָא דְּבִינָא

Translated literally, this must be rendered:

"What reason? Rabbah said because they are not acquainted with 'for her name'." The reader has to flesh out the text:

"What is the reason [for the requirement to make an oath]? Rabbah said: 'It is because [the Jews in foreign parts] are [for the most part] ignorant of [the rule of special intention by which a divorce document is only valid if written out specifically with] the name of [the wife in mind]'." This, combined with the frequently non-Aristotelian

logic of the rabbis, may well leave the new student somewhat bewildered at first.

Once the difficulties are overcome, considerable benefits accrue to the theology or history student who tackles these texts.

Theology first. The tannaitic writings well illustrate the Palestine of the time of Jesus - the institutions of the Temple, the economic and social life of the country, the thought-world of the Pharisees of the Gospels (2). The mishnaic will provide alternative views of Bible passages valuable for their own sake - as the Babylonian Talmud says on Jeremiah 23:29 ("Is not My word like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?") "As the hammer causes many sparks to flash forth, so is a scriptural verse capable of many interpretations" (b. Sanhedrin 34a). Rabbinic interpretations may well have influenced Christian theology as late as the third century through scholars such as Origen (3), and comparing the two new religions of Christianity and rabbinic Judaism side by side will illuminate them both (4). Not least, early rabbinic Judaism is worth analysing for its own sake - a process only just begun (5).

For the historian, both Galilee and Mesopotamia can come to life in these texts. The Galilean evidence is equalled only by the Egyptian papyri in the illustration of life in the Roman Empire from the point of view of the lower social orders. It gives an essential contrast to the aristocratic assumptions of the great Greek and Latin authors. Fortunately the dry climate of the Judean desert has also preserved papyri such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the soft limestone of Galilee encouraged building in durable stone, so that much concrete evidence remains to fill in the picture. Market dealings, land contracts, village scribes, money changers; all such things are vividly illustrated. So of the problems of the tenant farmer:

"The owner may lend his tenants wheat to be repaid in kind, if it is for sowing, but not if it is for food [to avoid usury] and the discussion goes on to deal with problems when the price of wheat rises or falls (M. Baba Metzia 5 : 8). Similar insights into Mesopotamian society from c. A.D. 200 to c. A.D. 500 can be culled from the Babylonian Talmud (6). Some such information is disconcerting, as, for instance, evidence of the widespread belief among rabbis in astrology:

"The Chaldeans (astrologers) told the mother of R. Nachman ben Isaac that her son would be a thief. She would not allow him to be bare-headed, and said to him, 'Keep your head covered so that the fear of Heaven shall be upon you, and pray for mercy'. [Head covering is clearly still exceptional for Jews in this period.] He did not know why she told him this. One day he was sitting and studying beneath a date-palm when his head-gear fell off. He raised his eyes, saw the date-palm, and a longing for the fruit overcame him so that he climbed up and bit off a cluster. [Not his fruit, so the prediction had come true!]" (b. Shabbat 156 b).

The advantages in studying these texts are evident, the dangers less so. Compilations such as that of Strack-Billerbeck (7), though useful, are arbitrary in their selections. It is equally unwise

to consider the more gnomic expressions in the text, such as those in the popular Pirkei Avoth, as giving the "essence" of rabbinic teaching - the words must be taken as a whole, and one needs to enter the thought-world of the rabbis themselves and accept the importance of, say, purity and tithes in the Mishnah as genuinely reflecting the rabbis' own preoccupations. More dauntingly, interpretation of difficult passages will be greatly eased by taking into account the huge medieval Rabbinic literature, mostly in Hebrew, that provides commentary on the texts (though it is important not to let these later views cloud the original meaning of the texts as almost all historians have been prepared to do until the last few years). Lastly, care must be taken to recognise the possibility of changes in rabbinic Judaism over the centuries. The delightful and learned compilation of quotations in A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* is trying to achieve the unachievable by describing rabbinic thought over five centuries. Dating of the legal changes is never easy - some innovations are obscured by the rabbis responsible claiming antiquity for their new ideas to give them respectability, while attempts to allocate legal changes to particular occasions in, for instance, the intertestamental period can often be little better than guesswork (9). Nevertheless, it is surely better to attempt to chart those changes rather than deny their existence.

Such are the problems. All can be surmounted. And prospects are rosy for a student entering this field. Rabbinic texts are readily available and some have translations and good editions for students' use. The Hebrew texts are not difficult to read and the Aramaic of the Talmuds is well worth the trouble. Serious study by non-rabbinic scholars is still comparatively rare. There are great opportunities for new insight and discovery.

Notes

1. J. Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70* 3 vols (Brill, Leiden 1971)
2. E. Schlatter, *The history of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ (175BC - AD135)* revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black (Clarendon, Edinburgh vol 1 1973, vol 2 1979)
3. N.R.M. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews. Studies in Jewish Christian Relations in Third Century Palestine* (CUP 1976)
4. S. Sandmel, *Judaism and Christian beginnings* (OUP 1978)
5. J. Neusner, *A History of the Mishnaic Laws of Purity* (22 vols) (Brill, Leiden 1974-77)
6. J. Neusner, *History of the Jews in Babylonia* (5 vols) (Brill, Leiden 1965-70)
7. H.L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Leipzig 1922)
8. A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (Dent, London 1932)
9. eg. Z.W. Falk, *Introduction to Jewish Law of the Second Commonwealth Part I* (Jerusalem 1972)

Other useful books

- H.L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash Engl. transl.
(Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia 1931;
now in paperback, printed by Schocken Books, New York)
- J. Bowker, The Targums and Rabbinic Literature (CUP 1969)
- E.P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism: a comparison of patterns
of religion (SCM, London 1977)
- S. Safrai and M. Stern edd, The Jewish People in the First Century
(Van Gorcom, Assen vol I 1974, vol II 1976) (to be used with
care)

For full lists of translations and editions, see Safrai and Stern op cit
vol I pp 15-18 and Schürer op cit (note 2) vol 1 pp 68-99.

Easily accessible are:

- Mishnah edition by P. Blackman, Mishnayoth (parallel Hebrew text and
English translation) (London 1955)
translation by H. Danby, The Mishnah (OUP 1933, reprinted 1972)
- Tosefta edition by M.S. Zuckerman, Tosefta based on the Erfurt and
Vienna codices, with parallels and variants
2nd ed with 'Supplement to the Tosefta' by S. Lieberman (Wahrman
Books, Jerusalem 1970)
translation by J. Neusner et al, The Tosefta 6 vols (Ktav, New
York 1977-)
- Jerusalem Talmud translation by M. Schwab, Le Talmud de Jerusalem 6 vols
(reprinted by Editions G-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, Paris 1977)
- Babylonian Talmud numerous editions available:
translation in I. Epstein ed, The Babylonian Talmud translated
into English 18 vols (Soncino 1961)
- Mekilta J.Z. Lauterbach ed, Mekilta de R. Ishmael (Hebrew text and English
translation) 3 vols (Jewish Publication Society of America,
Philadelphia 1933; paperback edition 1976)
- Midrash Rabbah translation in R. Fredman and M. Simon edd, Midrash
Rabbah 13 vols (Soncino, London 1939)

WIDENING HORIZONS: SOME COMPLEXITIES OF HEBREW GRAMMAR

by Grace Emmerson

(In addition to standard abbreviations, note that RBH = Readings in
Biblical Hebrew, listed on back cover.)

The Particle אַתְּ

The Hebrew text of the Old Testament holds some surprises for
the student. Take the particle אַתְּ, for example. Didn't he learn
in one of his first Hebrew lessons that this particle occurs frequently
in prose as an indicator of the definite object? And so it is with
rather more than mild surprise that he later discovers several instances
in the Old Testament where the same particle accompanies a noun which is
clearly not the object but the subject of a sentence, as in the following
examples:

וְאִישׁ אֶת-קִדְּשָׁיו לֹא יִהְיֶה

'As for any man, his sacred things shall be his', i.e. the priest's
(Num. 5.10).

וְאֵם אֶת-כָּל-דָּגֵי הַיָּם יֵאָסֶף לָהֶם

'Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them?'
(Num. 11.22).

וְאֵת הַפָּר הַשֵּׁנִי הֵעִלָּה עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ

'And the second bull was offered upon the altar' (Jud. 6.28).

וְאַתְּ-אַרְבַּעַת אֲלֵה יִלְדֹוּ לְהִרְפָּה

'These four were descended from the giants' (2 Sam. 21.22).

וְאַתְּ-הַבִּרְזֵל נָפַל אֶל-הַמַּיִם

'The iron tool fell into the water' (2 Kings 6.5).

Note that in all these instances the noun is both defined and
in an emphatic position preceding the verb, which in each instance is
either intransitive or passive.

With these can be compared a related group of passages which
differ only in the position of the noun, e.g.

אַל-יִרְרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה

'Do not let this matter distress you' (2 Sam. 11.25. See RBH II, p. 35).

וַיִּגַּד לְרִבְקָה אֶת-דְּבַר יִשָּׂא

'Esau's words were told to Rebekah' (Gen. 27.42).-

here verb and noun do not agree in number, and the verb is to be regarded
as impersonal, defined by the following noun.

How are such apparently contradictory functions of the particle to be explained? The connection between the particle and definition of the noun (1 Sam. 24.6 is a rare exception) suggests that in its basic meaning it is an emphasising particle, a meaning now imperceptible in the majority of instances where it came to indicate the accusative as case-endings became obsolete. (cf. GK 117 b).

This use of אֵת to emphasise the subject of a sentence is relevant to Gen. 49.25:

אֵת שְׁדַי וְיִבְרַכְךָ

frequently emended to אֵל שְׁדַי, as in the RSV, NEB and JB, for example. But the emendation is unnecessary, and removes the strong emphasis intended by the particle: 'even Shaddai Himself, who shall bless thee.' (See N. Walker, VT 5, 1955).

There is no uniform terminology to describe this use of אֵת with the subject of a sentence. It is sometimes referred to as אֵת with the nominative, though R.J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax* (1967) p. 14f regards it as an extension of the use of אֵת with the accusative, and refers to it as the 'emphatic accusative of specification, when the accusative is the semantic subject'. (See also J. Macdonald, 'The Particle אֵת in Classical Hebrew: some new data on its use with the Nominative', and P.P. Saydon, 'Meanings and Uses of the Particle אֵת', both in VT 14, 1964.)

Enclitic -m

The question is, does it, or does it not, exist in Hebrew? The opposing viewpoints are well illustrated in the following two articles, one by H.D. Hummell, JBL 76, 1957, a strong advocate for its frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, the other by G.R. Driver, JSS 10, 1965, (reviewing M. Dahood, *Proverbs and Northwest Semitic Philology*) who doubts whether a single example of enclitic -m is to be found anywhere in the Hebrew text. He laments that, through the ingenuity of some, it is 'growing like a weed'!

But first, what is it? Enclitic -m is a suffix of uncertain vocalisation which appears a number of times in the Ugaritic texts. Whether or not its presence conveys any particular meaning is not clear. The assumption that it exists also in Hebrew, but went unrecognised by the Massoretes as it fell into disuse, and hence was wrongly vocalised, seems, to some scholars, the solution to a number of problems in the text of the Old Testament. Others, however, maintain that all such instances are capable of explanation by less speculative means.

An interesting example occurs in Psalm 29.6:

וַיִּבְרְכֵם כְּמוֹ-עֶגְלָה
לְבָנוֹן וְשִׁירֵן כְּמוֹ בֶן-רֵאמִים

'And he made them skip like a calf,
Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox.'

The verbal suffix is here anticipatory, referring to Lebanon and Sirion.

It is, however, arguable that the final ׀ of the verb represents, not the third plural suffix, but enclitic -m (vocalised by Dahood, *Psalms III* (1970) p. 409, as wayyarqēd-mi), and the verse is to be translated

'And he made Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.'

This is the view adopted in the RSV, NEB and JB alike. Certainly it produces a neat and appealing meaning, with the balance of exact parallelism.

Several instances where a plural form seems to obtrude unaccountably in a singular context have been resolved by appealing to the presence of enclitic -m.

וַיַּעַן שְׁמוּאֵל אֶת-שָׁאוּל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי הָרֹאֶה עָלֶיךָ לְפָנַי
הַיּוֹם וְאַכְלֶתֶם עִמִּי הַיּוֹם

'Samuel answered Saul, "I am the seer; go up before me to the high place, for today you (plural) shall eat with me."' (1 Sam. 9.19).

נִמְצְאוּ הָאֲתוֹנוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִלַּכְתָּ לְבִקָּשׁ וְהִנֵּה נִמְשׁ אֲבִירָךְ
אֶת-דְּבָרֶיךָ הָאֲתוֹנוֹת וְדָאָג לָכֶם לֵאמֹר מָה אֲעֲשֶׂה לְבָנִי

'The asses which you went to seek are found, and now your father has ceased to care about the asses and is anxious about you (plural), saying, "What shall I do about my son?"' (1 Sam. 10.2).

נִסְגְּוּ אַחֲרַי בְּשׁוּ-בִשְׁתָּ
הָאֲמָרִים לְמִסְכָּה אֲתָם אֶל־הֵינוּ

'They shall be turned back and utterly put to shame

who say to a molten image,

"You (plural) are our god(s)"' (Isaiah 42.17).

The plural forms in question are revocalised as the appropriate second person singular with suffixed m.

Genesis 1.9, 'Let the waters be gathered together into one place (מִקְוֵה)' has always presented something of a problem. The suggestion has often been made that מִקְוֵה 'gathering' should

be read here as in verse 10 (see BH³). Indeed G has מִקְוֵה for

מִקְוֵה, and this is followed by JB: 'Let the waters come together into a single mass.' The acceptance of enclitic -m here resolves the problem without resort to emendation.

A theological point is at issue in Hosea 14.3. Does the prophet consider animal sacrifice a worthy expression of penitence or not? The two opposing viewpoints are illustrated by the NEB,

'We will pay our vows with cattle from our pens,'

and the RSV, 'We will render the fruit of our lips' (an avowed emendation as the footnote indicates; cf. JB). The Hebrew is problematic:

וַיִּשְׁלַח פָּרִים שְׁפָתֵינוּ

בָּרִים ('bulls') and שְׂפִתֵינוּ ('our lips') appear to be in apposition, the second noun apparently elucidating the meaning of the first. It is arguable, however, that here, too, the difficulty has arisen from failure to recognise enclitic -m suffixed to פֶּרִי 'fruit', and thus the meaning proposed by the RSV (cf. G) can be supported without resort to emendation. Yet it is equally possible to resolve the problem by redividing the words, פֶּרִי שְׂפִתֵינוּ.

'bulls of our pens'. In this instance the meaning can only ultimately be determined in the light of Hosea's attitude to the cult.

See also J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (1968), and F.C. Fensham, 'Ugaritic and the Translation of the Old Testament', *The Bible Translator*, 1967.

Inseparable Prepositions

'In any one language the meaning of the prepositions is a highly subtle, difficult, and idiosyncratic structure of possibilities and choices' (J. Barr, *op. cit.* p. 176). That the Hebrew inseparable prepositions have a wide range of meanings soon becomes clear to the student. (For a useful summary see R.J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax* (1967) p. 47-54). One of the points still debated, however, is whether, in the light of Ugaritic usage, we are justified in including the meaning 'from' for the Hebrew prepositions ב and ל. Dahood, *Psalms III*, lists a number of passages where he attributes this meaning to ב (p. 391-3) and to ל (p. 394-5).

A notable example is Psalm 68.19 (EV 18): לְקַחְתָּ מִתְּנוּת בָּאָדָם

— translated variously as 'receiving gifts among men' (RSV), 'having received tribute from men' (NEB), and 'you have taken men as tribute' (JB. cf. also J.H. Eaton, *Psalms*, 1967, 'having received tribute in human kind'). Certainly the translation of ב as 'from' gives an easy and appropriate meaning here, but the existence of other equally possible translations makes the evidence inconclusive.

Another passage where the meaning 'from' seems particularly apt, it is argued, is Isaiah 27.13:

וְבָאוּ הָאֲבָדִים בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
לְהַדְרִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

'and they shall come which are ready to perish, from the land of Assyria and they that were outcasts from the land of Egypt' (Fensham, *op. cit.*) Yet here also other meanings are possible. NEB translates, 'those who are lost in Assyria and those dispersed in Egypt' (cf. RSV 'lost in driven out to', and JB 'lost in exiled to'). It must, in any case, be noted that the occurrences of ב in the following line both clearly have a locative meaning: 'on the holy mountain in Jerusalem'. Here is the crux of the debate. Can the same preposition be used to convey adequately two such opposite meanings? Several points must be taken into account in considering this question.

1. The meaning of a preposition in any given instance is necessarily determined largely by the words used in conjunction with it, - cf. ל meaning variously 'upon, over, beside' (sometimes ambiguous as in Amos 9.1), and in hostile contexts 'against'. The meaning 'from' for ב may therefore be clearly defined by the verbs which it accompanies, and thus confusion of meaning will not arise.

But

2. Though English idiom may sometimes require the translation 'from', it does not follow that the Hebrew preposition itself has that meaning, for Hebrew idiom may differ. (See E. Sutcliffe, *VT* 5, 1955).

3. The usage in Ugaritic may not correspond to that in Hebrew, since the latter has also the very common preposition מִן (cf. Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 176).

4. We have no means of knowing whether in Ugaritic ב 'in' and ב 'from' were in fact homonyms, for they may have been distinguished by their vocalisation. (cf. Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 175).

Psalm 60.3 (EV 1), אָנָּה יְהוָה בָּרַכְנוּ לָנוּ, is one of the passages adduced as an example of ל with the meaning 'from': 'You turned away from us' (Dahood; cf. also Fensham, *art. cit.*). This meaning has not been accepted in the standard translations for various other meanings are equally possible. The question remains open.

See also N.M. Sarna, 'The Interchange of the Prepositions Beth and Min in Biblical Hebrew', *JBL* 78, 1959, who finds this the solution to many exegetical problems.

ב and ל expressing identity

The preposition ב frequently expresses likeness, but, as R.J. Williams points out (*Syntax*, p. 49), this may be 'either similarity or identity'. An interesting example occurs in Hosea 12.12 (EV 11), where the decision taken on this point affects the meaning considerably. Is the prophet saying that Israel's altars will resemble the heaps of stones gathered from a field in preparation for ploughing, either in their abundance (so NEB, 'common as heaps of stones'), or in their utter lack of significance (so J.L. Mays, *Hosea* (1969) p. 169)? Or is he affirming that they will be destroyed and themselves become rubble heaps (so JB, 'their altars shall be reduced to heaps of stones'; cf. H.W. Wolff, *Hosea*, ET 1974, p. 207)?

In contrast to this ambiguity, Nehemiah 7.2 provides a clear example of the use of ל to express identity (sometimes known for convenience as *kaph veritatis*): כִּי־הוּא כְּאִשׁ אֱמֶת

'for he was trustworthy'. Similarly Psalm 122.3, יְרוּשָׁלַם הַבְנוּיָהּ כְּעִיר,

has the meaning, 'Jerusalem that is built to be a city where people come together in unity' (NEB).

We may link with these examples the usage in which the preposition is repeated to express identity:

e.g. Joshua 14.11, $\text{אָז יִכְכְּחִי אֲנִי כְּכֹחִי שְׁפָה}$ — 'I am still as strong now as I was then';

Hosea 4.9, $\text{וְהָיָה כָּצֶם בְּפִנֵּה} —$ 'But people and priest shall be treated alike' (NEB; cf. GK 118 x; BDB p. 454).

The preposition ב is also used to express identity, a use often conveniently labelled *bath essentiae*. Sometimes English idiom does not require a corresponding preposition, as in Exodus 18.4:

$\text{בְּיָמֵי אָבִי בְּיָמֵי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי}$ 'For the God of my father was my help',

and Deuteronomy 26.5: $\text{וַיֵּגֶר שָׁם בְּמִתְרֵי מִצְרַיִם}$

'he sojourned there few in number.' In other instances it requires an

equivalent preposition. Thus Exodus 6.3,

$\text{וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אֶל-יִצְחָק וְאֶל-יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שַׁדְדַי}$

is translated, 'I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El Shaddai.' This is perhaps the meaning also of Genesis 1.26 with its problematical exegesis:

$\text{וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ}$

'Then God said, "Let us make man as (i.e. to be) our image" (though cf. J. Barr, 'The Image of God in the Book of Genesis: A Study of Terminology', *Bulletin of John Rylands Library* 51, 1968). As a last example we may take Proverbs 8.8 (RBH II, p. 116, though an opinion on the point is not expressed):

$\text{בְּצַדִּיק פֶּל-אֶמְרֵי פִי}$

where the preposition is more likely ב of identity (*essentiae*) than of accompaniment: 'All the words of my mouth are righteous'.

The Passive Qal

Among the grammatical notes in RBH reference is made several times to the possibility that certain verb forms are to be regarded as examples of passive Qal. In general the passive is expressed by Niphal, Pual or Hophal, or by an impersonal construction. Yet the idea of a passive Qal should not come entirely as a surprise since the existence of a Qal passive participle is already familiar to the student of elementary Hebrew.

The following examples of possible passive Qal are taken from RBH II.

Gen. 3.19 (p. 15) לִקְחָתָּהּ 'you were taken', apparently Pual perfect.

Gen. 18.4 (p. 21) יִקָּח-נָא 'let it be taken', apparently Hophal imperfect of the same verb.

Nahum.1.10 (p. 78) אֶכְלִי 'they were consumed', apparently Pual perfect. (See also Neh. 2.3,13, p. 47, 49, where the form is not noted).

Other instances include the familiar passages

2 Kings 5.17 יִתֵּן-נָא 'let it be given', apparently Hophal

imperfect of יָתַן , and Gen. 6.1 יִלְדוּ

'they were born', apparently Pual perfect of יָלַד .

But why is there any question about these forms? Why are they not simply Pual perfect, or Hophal imperfect, as they appear to be? The suspicion that we have an old passive Qal form arises where there is ostensibly a Pual perfect which has no corresponding Pual imperfect, and no corresponding active form, i.e. Piel, (cf. GK 52e), and likewise where there appears to be a Hophal imperfect which has no corresponding perfect, and no corresponding active form, i.e. Hiphil (cf. GK 53 u).

Note as regards יִלְדוּ — 'they were born' that there

is a Piel form, though in view of the difference of meaning ('to help to bring forth, act as midwife', Ex. 1.16) it can hardly be called the corresponding active.

אֶכְלִי 'they were consumed' has no corresponding Piel form. In this instance, however, there is one occurrence of the corresponding imperfect תִּאֲכַלְוּ (Isaiah 1.20).

Perhaps the most compelling argument is the extreme unlikelihood that, in the case of such common verbs as לָקַח and יָלַד , of all the forms of the Hiphil and Hophal only the Hophal imperfect should have been preserved. On logical grounds, therefore, the theory of a passive Qal seems preferable.

See also R.J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax* p. 32; M. Dahood, *Psalms III* p. 388, who lists passages in the Psalms where he suspects the presence of passive Qal, unrecognised by the Massoretes and hence wrongly vocalised.

'Internal' Hiphil

The student accustomed to thinking of the Hiphil as causative may be surprised to find, not infrequently, an intransitive use of the Hiphil expressing not causation, but the exhibiting of a particular quality, or the entering into a certain condition. It is this intransitive use of the Hiphil which is sometimes known as the 'internal' Hiphil, since the action or state which it describes applies to the subject. (See GK 53 d-f; R.J. Williams, *Syntax*, p. 30). It is for this reason that

the comment on Psalm 1.3 (RBH II, p. 61) explains that the Hiphil

הִצְלִיחַ may mean either 'to be successful' or 'to make successful'. Taken in the latter sense it is causative, in the former 'internal' Hiphil. The one is transitive with כֹּל as its object, the other is intransitive.

An unambiguous example of the intransitive Hiphil of צָלַח occurs in Judges 18.5: וְגִדְעָה הַתְּצִלִּים הַרְכָּנוּ

'that we may know whether our journey will succeed'. And Gen. 39.2-3 interestingly provides examples of both internal and causative Hiphil side by side. In verse 2 Joseph is described as אִישׁ מַצְלִיחַ,

'a successful man' (the participle is intransitive). In verse 3 the same word is applied to Yahweh who 'was causing everything he did to prosper in his hand'.

As examples of verbs in the intransitive Hiphil which are used to indicate the exhibiting of a quality we can group together the following:

הִזְנָה	'to act the harlot' (Hosea 3.3; 4.10)
הִשְׁפִּיל	'to act wisely' (Amos 5.13; Ps. 2.10)
הִסְקִיל	'to play the fool' (Gen. 31.28; 1 Sam. 26.21)
הִרְשִׁיעַ	'to act wickedly' (Ps. 106.6; Neh. 9.33)
הִטְרִים	'to act craftily' (1 Sam. 23.22; Pro. 19.25)

Others indicate 'growing ...' or 'becoming ...', such as

הִזְקִין	'to grow old' (Job 14.8; Pro. 22.6)
הִלְבִּין	'to become white' (Isa. 1.18; Ps. 51.9/7)
הִחֲשִׁיךְ	'to become dark' (Ps. 139.12)
הִחֲרִישׁ	'to be silent' (Gen. 24.21; 2 Kings 18.36)
הִוִּישׁ	'to become ashamed' (Jer. 2.26; 8.9).

INTRODUCTION TO AKKADIAN

by Wilfred Lambert

The name 'Akkadian' is the term used to embrace Babylonian and Assyrian, which differ dialectally, and their third-millennium predecessor, Old Akkadian. The name derives from Akkad, the town apparently not far from Babylon built by Sargon of Akkad c. 2300 B.C. He was a kind of prototype of Alexander the Great, creating a vast but short-lived empire from the Persian Gulf to the Eastern Mediterranean. Whereas previously Sumer, as the most southerly parts of ancient Iraq were then known, was dominated by Sumerian culture and the Sumerian language, Sargon promoted a new ideal of kingship, a new concept of government, and a new official language. The Semitic 'Akkadian' (a term used by the ancients to contrast linguistically with Sumerian) served alongside the non-Semitic Sumerian in his royal inscriptions. Semites had long been resident in the area, but only then did their language become an official language so that it was written down and we can read it. This is the earliest known Semitic language. Still earlier traces can be found. Semites and Sumerians had evidently been living in contact for many centuries before Sargon of Akkad, because, though their languages are in general structure and vocabulary totally distinct, in details there are many remarkable similarities, and there are loan words in both directions.

Thus the Akkadian *tamkarum* 'merchant', from the root *mkr*, was borrowed in Sumerian as *damqara* (probably pronounced *tamkara*), while the Sumerian *é.gal* 'palace', a combination of *é* 'house' and *gal* 'big' passed into Akkadian as *ēkallu*, and reached Hebrew as *hekal* 'palace' or 'temple'. More substantial influences of Sumerian on Akkadian occurred in phonetics and syntax. The Sumerian sentence order is quite like that of Latin: subject - object - verb, and this is also the Akkadian sentence order. Without knowing the prehistory of Akkadian, before it came under Sumerian influence, there can be no proof that its word order was influenced by Sumerian, but the very different word order of Canaanite strongly supports this conclusion. Also there are Semitic personal names attested in Sumerian documents before Sargon of Akkad, such as Il-Addu 'Adad (Hadad) is God', or 'El is a storm god', but their value for reconstructing the language is limited.

The emergence of Akkadian as a written language c. 2300 B.C. thus took place in a context of Sumerian culture, and to the same source it owes its script. Akkadian is the only Semitic language not written in an alphabetic script. The Sumerians developed their script in the early third millennium B.C. as a true writing system, that is as a means of recording human speech and thought. It was preceded by book-keeping systems which served to record numbers, amounts and measures, but these symbols could be 'read' in any language, like numerals still, and were not therefore a true writing system. The original Sumerian script consisted of pictograms for noun- and verb-roots ('ideograms' or 'logograms') and some of these were soon adapted to serve also as signs for syllables to express the grammatical elements required to indicate such things as case and plurality of nouns, and the person, tense, etc. of the verbs. In addition there were signs which were not pronounced called 'determinatives'. These were added to nouns to indicate the class of object: wooden things had the sign for 'wood' prefixed. Names of kinds of fishes had the sign 'fish' following, and so on.

Easily available local materials from the Southern Mesopotamian alluvial plain served as the ordinary writing materials: clay for the tablet to be inscribed, a piece of reed with trimmed end to serve as the writing implement, the stylus. The clay was softened in water as for a potter, then an inner core was wrapped around with a thin outer layer. Tablets vary in size from about an inch square to about a foot and a half square, though oblong in the commonest shape, the length being greater than the breadth. At first the surface of the tablet, unless it was one of the smallest, of which each side constituted a single compartment, was divided into compartments which began at the right upper corner and ran downwards with as many vertical rows of compartments as necessary to fill the area of each side. Thus the last compartment on the obverse was the bottom one of the far left row. The tablet was then turned top to bottom and the rows of compartments on the reverse were similar to those on the obverse, except that instead of going from right to left, the scribe started writing at the point on the reverse closest to where he finished on the obverse, i.e. at the top left, and so the rows of compartments went from left to right on the reverse.

At first a group of signs was put in each compartment entirely at whim: their positions within the compartments give no indication of their sequence in the sentence or word. The reader has to work out the correct order for himself. Over the first half of the third millennium this unsatisfactory arrangement was improved. The haphazardly placed signs in compartments in rows developed into lines of signs in correct order, the lines forming columns on the tablets when these were sufficiently large to have more than one column on each side. Thus when Akkadian was first written down, the signs were inscribed in correct order in lines.

Clay was not a good material for drawing real pictures. Soon after the invention of clay tablets the pictograms became patterns of wedge-shaped impressions in the surface of the clay. Scribes held the stylus in the clenched fist and pressed downwards into the surface of the tablet, which was held at a slanting angle to the movement of the stylus. The result was a wedge-shaped impression, and from the Latin *cuneus* 'wedge' the modern name of the writing system, cuneiform, is derived. The other major development in script was a change in direction. The lines were first vertical, beginning from the top right corner. Since the stylus was held in the right hand, this method of writing risked the smoothing over of lines already written as the hand moved to write further lines. So tablets were turned around 90 degrees and the writing was begun at the top left corner and continued horizontally from left to right. Otherwise things continued as before, and the result of this change is that all the signs are in fact lying on their sides. It appears that this change in direction took place between about 2000 and 1500 B.C. Tablets of course do not reveal anything because they can be held either way, but inscriptions on, for example, stone steles with human figures do clearly indicate the direction of the writing, though they may have archaized compared with clay tablets.

The adaptation of Sumerian script for a Semitic language was not without its problems. Sumerian script immediately before the time of Sargon of Akkad used over 500 different signs, many of which had more than one ideographic or syllabic value. The system had been developed for the Sumerian language in which the verbal or nominal root is an indivisible unit, to which are prefixed or suffixed the various grammatical elements when the noun or verb is used in a sentence.

Akkadian nouns could be expressed by this system. For example, the Sumerian sign for 'king' (in fact a combination of two signs *LÚ* + *GAL* 'man' and 'big', always written *GAL* + *LÚ* in wrong order, a survival from the period when order of signs was not observed) was used for the Akkadian word for 'king', *šarrum*. The reader had to know the word. Its phonetic form was not spelt out in the script. Further, he had to know the correct ending, since in all but the latest stages of Akkadian there were three cases for nouns and adjectives, like Arabic: the nominative, subject or complement, ending in *-um*; the accusative ending in *-am*; and the genitive ('of' and after prepositions) in *-im*. The reader had to supply the correct case from his grasp of the sentence. Plurals were usually expressed by using a Sumerian plural element, the commonest being *MES*, literally 'they are'. Thus *LUGAL.MES* meant in Akkadian 'kings', and the reader had to know the correct plural form and render either *šarrū* or *šarrānu* for the nominative or *šarri* or *šarrāni* for the accusative or genitive. The possessive endings common to all Semitic languages could be added with signs for syllables exactly as in Sumerian, only the reader had to know the correct form of the noun on which to attach them. Thus *LUGAL-ka* was 'your king', to be read *šarraka* or *šarka* if in the nominative or accusative, but *šarrika* if in the genitive.

Semitic verbs lend themselves to this kind of writing much less easily than nouns. The root is normally three consonants and the various formative elements are infixed as much as prefixed or suffixed. However, Akkadian does in some cases write the Sumerian sign for the verb with the appropriate meaning and leave readers to supply the correct form from the sentence. Help is sometimes given by adding a syllable at the end to indicate how the Semitic form ended, and this is called a phonetic complement. E.g. the verb *pru* 'determine' would be written with the Sumerian sign *BAR*, and if the form were *iptaras*, then the scribe could help the reader by writing *BAR-as*, while if the form were *iprus*, then he would write *BAR-us*. More commonly verbs are written entirely in syllable-signs, e.g. *ip-ta-ra-as*. Although all periods and genres of texts have their conventions as to how words should be expressed through the signs, there is often a fair measure of freedom for each scribe to choose between alternative ways. In a period when on clay a scribe would generally write e.g. *ip-ru-us*, on a small stone object with little space a scribe might well write *BAR* if he felt that the reader could reasonably be expected to work out that *iprus* was meant. In many periods there were many ways of writing nouns, and it was fully permissible to write these syllabically. Thus 'king' could be *šar-rum*, *ša-ar-rum*, *ša-ar-ru-um*, *šá-ár-ru-um*, *ša-ru-um*, etc. Doubled consonants did not have to be expressed in the script (note *ša-ru-um* for *šarrum*), but the repetition of a vowel as in *ša-ar-* does not make it either long or short. Vowel length can be indicated, e.g. in *ra-bu-ú* the *U* is long, but *ra-bu-um* is to be rendered *rabûm*, and such writings as *ra-bu-ú-um* do occur. There are often several signs with the same value, and these are differentiated in transliteration as: *u*, *ú*, *û*, *u_k*, *u₅*, etc.

It will be understood that cuneiform script is a very inadequate guide to the precise grammatical form of Akkadian, for which reason grammar is learnt in transcription. Learning the script and writing system takes a long time, and to some extent the task is never finished.

One can never say that one knows every sign and sign form. They varied from period to period, from medium to medium, e.g. on stone some scribes archaize, and within one period scribes may have individual hands. Also particular genres of texts may employ very different writing systems though using common sign forms. Late copies of omens use almost exclusively ideograms, many of which are almost unknown outside this genre. Thus one may be able to read, say, royal inscriptions with ease, but be utterly unable to read a single line of late omens. Technical subjects, like chemistry, mathematics and astronomy also have distinctive writing techniques which match their specialised subject matter.

Even the signs for syllables are only approximate guides to pronunciation in many cases. Thus one sign has the three values aq, ak and ag; another the values iq, ik and ig; and a third uq, uk and ug. Though Akkadian writes four vowels, a, e, i, u, in all periods the script very poorly differentiates i from e. But at least vowels are indicated, even if o is merged with u in the script and i and e are often not distinguished. Other scripts for Semitic languages are no less ambiguous in certain matters. The original alphabet script is considered a syllabary by some. It is assumed that each 'consonantal' sign really stood for that consonant plus any vowel either before or behind. Whether or not this is accepted, one has to add many vowels to most Semitic languages, except where systems of pointing or other means supply the need. The earliest of these, however, the use of W for o and u, etc., is as ambiguous as the cuneiform signs with i and e. Also the consonant signs in the alphabets were at times ambiguous. Biblical Hebrew had one sign for 'ayin and ġayin, though the two sounds were distinguished in speech. The Arabic alphabet has many more pairs, or groups of three consonants sharing the same symbol, but differentiated by extra marks. Students of Kufic are fully aware of the problems!

One result of the cumbersome writing systems used for Akkadian is that only professional scribes could read and write. Ordinary people, and even most rulers, were illiterate. Thus the problem of the relationship of the written language to the spoken language is more acute here than in some other ancient languages. The inadequacies of the script are one thing, but in addition scribes, as products of a rigorous traditional schooling, tended to archaize. However, study of all surviving material does allow one to gain an idea of the relationship of the written to the spoken word. Poor quality scribes writing the humbler contracts will often make 'mistakes' that in reality reflect the spoken tongue. The following survey attempts to describe the variety of dialects of Akkadian over the millennia, from the middle of the third millennium B.C. to the end of the first century A.D., both in Mesopotamia and in adjacent lands as appropriate.

Old Akkadian, the language of the second half of the third millennium is inadequately known from many personal names, some royal inscriptions and a very few magic texts of great interest but difficulty. In Southern Mesopotamia it was used against a strong Sumerian background, but its use is also known from documents found in Elam, Nuzi and Mari, where, in the two latter places, it was no doubt the spoken language. More publication of Ebla tablets must be awaited before one can speak confidently of the relationship of Old Akkadian to the Semitic language of Ebla. There may well have been dialectal differences between the

various local forms of Old Akkadian, but more evidence is needed. The end of the third millennium marked a big break. First, it is the time that Sumerian died out as a spoken language, though it remained the language of the schools for a great deal longer, and literary texts were composed in it up to about 1000 B.C., after which traditional texts continued to be copied, but almost nothing new was composed. Secondly, Old Akkadian underwent a substantial change in southern and central Mesopotamia over the first two centuries of the second millennium. The dialect that resulted is called Babylonian, though at first it is a misnomer, since Babylon was totally unimportant until the reign of Hammurabi, c. 1793-1750 B.C. The time of this change was the period of the Amorite invasions. This previously nomadic group descended on Sumer, broke up the existing Third Dynasty of Ur, and settled down as ruling families in the Sumerian and Akkadian cities. Their language was Amorite, known from personal names only, of which Hammurabi is one. The first element, written hammu, is the cuneiform rendering of the Hebrew 'am 'people', the second element is of uncertain derivation. So far as one can judge, Amorite could be described as a kind of primitive Hebrew. However, the striking thing is that the changes from Old Akkadian to Babylonian are not attributable to Amorite influence. For example, the prefixed forms of the verb corresponding to the Arabic yaqtulu (3rd sing. masc.) and taqtulu (ibid. fem.) were iprus-taprus in Old Akkadian, but in Babylonian the separate feminine form disappears and the masculine serves for both. Amorite, like most Semitic languages, retains the separate feminine.

From roughly 2000 B.C. and onwards Akkadian is known from two main dialects: Babylonian and Assyrian, a dichotomy which lasted until the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C., which witnessed the death of the Assyrian dialect, so that Babylonian alone remained. Assyria was a small piece of territory on the upper Tigris with capital at Assur, though Nineveh, another ancient city, is also to be counted Assyrian. What held the Assyrians together throughout their history was in part their language, which continued, with normal linguistic development, while all around them cultures with other languages came and went. Assyrian did not undergo the changes that resulted in Babylonian in the south, so it remained much closer to Old Akkadian. For example, it preserved the 3rd person feminine verbal form taprus. Both Assyrian and Babylonian are known from three main more or less well documented periods, each called Old, Middle and New or Late. One condition which affected their relative histories is that Babylonian was spoken in the cities which had been Sumerian centres of culture and learning, a tradition which continued in Babylonian times, while Assyria was in cultural terms provincial, and though in some periods it produced art which excelled that of the south, in literate culture Assyria was always inferior.

Old Babylonian is very well documented from c. 1800-1600 B.C. In view of the political, social and linguistic changes associated with the fall of the last Sumerian dynasty, the period was innovative in many ways, and Akkadian literature began to develop as it had not done before. No doubt it arose orally first, and only then, because of the conservatism of the scribal school with their Sumerian heritage, did it get written down. This literature is classical as being fresh and vigorous, and in the judgment of many it is the finest that Mesopotamia ever produced. The Gilgamesh Epic was complete by c. 1600 B.C. though

it is only partially preserved in Old Babylonian copies. At many points one has to fill in with later, inferior versions. This is one advantage of cuneiform literature. There was a scribal tradition, but, unlike the cases of the Pentateuch and Homer, it can be tapped at various stages in its development. Not only the final form survives. Other documents in Old Babylonian survive: letters, contracts, court case records, etc., including the famous laws of Hammurabi. It is now known that many of his laws are verbatim translations of earlier, Sumerian laws. Also the royal inscriptions of Hammurabi and his successors were put out in both Sumerian and Babylonian versions, which regularly agree word for word. Outside Southern Mesopotamia Old Babylonian, with slight dialectal variants, was the language of central Mesopotamia (the Mari letters attest this), and as the language of literate culture it was used among the Syrians, the Hittites in Anatolia, and in Elam. One suspects that the language of the Mesopotamian letters is very close to actual speech.

Old Assyrian is known, save for a few royal inscriptions, over a shorter period, c. 1900-1800 B.C., and chiefly from the trading colonies in Cappadocia, the ancient Kanesh especially. Its vast archives in the Old Assyrian language are clearly, allowing for the technical, commercial content, a form of the spoken language of contemporary Assyria. The scribes probably knew no Sumerian. There is a very small quantity of short religio-magic pieces of high literary quality in the same dialect, but so far as we know this tradition was never developed much. Political changes in Anatolia brought about the complete cessation of this trade, and with it the end of our knowledge of Old Assyrian.

The Hittites ended the Old Babylonian period by marching to Babylon c. 1600 B.C. and sacking it. Then the Cassites, invaders from the Zagros mountains ultimately, took over and for two or three centuries there is total obscurity. When there is light again, c. 1350 B.C., we are in the Middle Babylonian period, and the middle of the Cassite dynasty. The Cassite language was not Semitic and only personal names and a few loan words are known, save for a short Cassite-Babylonian vocabulary, which seems in fact to be based mainly on personal names. The possible Indo-European connections of Cassite are still matters for study. Apart from the loan-words, which are not always proved to be of Cassite etymology, though the Cassites reasonably certainly introduced them, it is doubtful whether there is any Cassite influence on the Middle Babylonian dialect. The development from Old to Middle was purely internal. For example, mimation, the *-m* on the case endings, was normal in Old Akkadian and Old Babylonian, but while the endings remain in correct use, the mimation drops in Middle Babylonian. By chance little literature has survived in copies of the Middle Babylonian period from southern Mesopotamia, though there is every reason to believe that it was a productive period, if lacking the freshness of Old Babylonian creativity and at times more compilatory than original. The literature of the Old Babylonian period was sifted and edited and new texts were composed. The addition to Babylonian language and writing had subsided in Elam, but in Assyria, North West Mesopotamia, Syria, Anatolia, Palestine and even Egypt the Babylonian language and its cuneiform script were admired things, the means of international communication and at the same time literature spread from Babylonia to the outlying areas. The Amarna period is famous for this internationalism, and it was probably at this time that the Babylonian traditions, including the flood story, spread from Mesopotamia to Syria and Palestine. More Middle Babylonian literary texts have in fact been

recovered from such sites as Boghaz-Koy and Ras Shamra than from Babylonian cities. Their language can hardly be used as evidence of spoken Middle Babylonian because of the literary tradition which had built up, and which gave rise at about this time to a purely literary idiom, commonly called Standard Babylonian. For spoken Middle Babylonian there are letters, especially from the ancient town Nippur. Inscribed Boundary Stones, which are a new type of document of the Middle Babylonian period, are written in a language which soon became highly stylised and artificial.

Middle Assyrian is known from Assyrian documents c. 1300-1075 B.C. They consist of royal inscriptions, compilations of laws, a compilation of palace regulations, and letters and administrative documents. However, in all cases there is risk of some Babylonian influence, most in the royal inscriptions, least in the letters. It is known that one Middle Assyrian king employed a Babylonian scribe and no doubt there were other cases of which we are uninformed. As with Middle Babylonian, Middle Assyrian is a development from Old Assyrian, and there too mimation dropped, but the case endings continued to be used correctly. Most literary texts recovered in Middle Assyrian copies are of Babylonian origin. There was some genuine literary creativity in Assyria, seen, for example, in the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic, a literary account of the conflict between this king (c. 1244-1207 B.C.) and his Babylonian contemporary, Kashtiliash, but this is essentially Babylonian, and the Assyrianisms that occur may well be the work of copyists.

Both Assyria and Babylonia suffered severe setbacks c. 1000 B.C. Arameans flooded into the country from the Syrian desert and ravaged both Assyria and Babylonia. Assyria recovered first because the Arameans did not stay there. They moved down through Southern Mesopotamia and settled in tribal groups near the Persian Gulf. This left a divided country since the old city-dwelling Babylonians remained. Gradually the two communities merged or learnt to get on with each other so that under Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar (c. 600 B.C.) Babylon became a world power once more. Linguistically the result of the merger was that Babylonian died out as a spoken language and was replaced by Aramaic, which was presumably influenced by Babylonian, as is clear at least in the case of loan-words. The timing of this process is not certainly known, but one suspects that Aramaic was normal on the streets already in Nebuchadnezzar's time. Assyria, as already stated, was not subject to such Aramaic pressure. In a sense things continued as before. The literature read and copied in the libraries, of which those of King Ashurbanipal are the most famous, was almost entirely of Babylonian origin and in Standard Babylonian. But whereas Middle Assyrian copies of Babylonian texts are often defective if elegantly written, Late Assyrian scribes were fully the equals of their Babylonian brethren in breadth of learning and accuracy of work. Thus it is no surprise to find that Late Assyrian royal inscriptions are written in Standard Babylonian, though the occasional Assyrianism occurs, especially in those of the ninth century B.C., but those of the last four great Assyrian kings, Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, were partly composed by scholars of great literary attainment, who introduced a wide range of poetic phraseology into royal annals, even to the extent of incorporating whole sections from poetic texts. The Late Assyrian dialect was used in letters, of which many remain, but even here Babylonisms occur.

However, these letters are enough for a study of the language, which remains to be undertaken. Clearly big changes were taking place. The only major text in Late Assyrian dialect is the Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon, and this reveals a totally unexpected wealth of unparalleled imagery in the curses. Perhaps the Assyrian dialect tradition had been more fertile in literature than the surviving texts allow us to know.

The literary products of the Late Babylonian empire are chiefly the royal inscriptions. They are meant to be in Standard Babylonian but the perceptive reader is made conscious that even this was changing, presumably under the impact of spoken Aramaic. Letters, from the end of the Late Assyrian empire and from the period of the Late Babylonian empire, are clearly in a vernacular which some consider a distinct language from previous Babylonian. It has been described as Aramaic syntax and mainly Babylonian vocabulary. During the following Persian, Seleucid and Parthian eras the cuneiform tradition was kept alive, first in a few of the old centres, but gradually they died out until Babylon alone was left. Standard Babylonian was the language of this academic community and it was essentially a rearguard action to which they were committed: to keep alive their cultural heritage. It is remarkable that it lasted until the second century A.D.

Akkadian grammar is relatively simple, and it is easily mastered by any one who already knows another Semitic language. It is customary to begin with Old Babylonian, because it is well known and is regular. It also opens up Middle Babylonian and the literary wealth of Standard Babylonian. Its phoneme stock is most similar to that of Biblical Hebrew, though, presumably under Sumerian influence, some of the distinctive Semitic sounds, such as 'ayin, were lost, as indeed happened in Middle Hebrew. In vocabulary also Akkadian is closer to Hebrew than to any other Semitic language. In grammar there are some distinctive features, especially in the verb. The Akkadian form corresponding to the Arabic yaqtulu, namely iprus, is the preterite, corresponding in meaning to the Arabic qatala. This preterite can also be found in Ugaritic, early Hebrew poetry and in the so-called waw-consecutive in Biblical Hebrew. The Akkadian form corresponding to the Arabic qatala, namely paris, is called the stative. It is in principle timeless, and is used particularly to indicate states, though it does occur in active, transitive use. The Akkadian form corresponding to the meanings of the Arabic yaqtulu is iparras, stressed on the second syllable with corresponding doubling of the following consonant. A parallel form is perhaps found in Ugaritic, but not generally in the Semitic languages. A fourth tense peculiar to Akkadian is the perfect: iptaras, formed with an infix -t- after the first consonant of the root. In Old Babylonian it had two functions: by itself it indicated an event in the recent past, but it was also used in a string of verbs joined by suffixed -ma to indicate a sequence of events. All but the last one were preterite plus -ma, the last one, without -ma, was perfect. Later the perfect became virtually an alternative for the preterite. As to verbal stems, Akkadian has a neat scheme of four: the simple form, corresponding to the Hebrew gal (I), the form with double middle consonant (Hebrew pi'el: II), the causative with prefixed š (III) and the passive or reflexive with prefixed n (IV). Each of these three stems exists in three variants, the simple unmarked form (I/1, II/1, etc.), the form with infix -t- (I/2, II/2, etc.), and

the form with infix -tan- (I/3, etc.). The -t- infix, which produces some forms identical with the perfect tense, usually gives a reflexive or passive meaning, but there are special usages. The I/2 of alākum 'go' means 'go away'. The infix -tan- indicates a repetition of the action of the verb. Not every verb can take every form. The IV stem, being already passive or reflexive, will not normally have a IV/2. Passives, of which Arabic has a complete range and Hebrew traces for the gal, but a fully developed pu'al and hoph'al, do not exist in Akkadian. There are verbal classes differentiated by vowels like the Arabic qatala-salima-hasuna in Akkadian:

<u>iprus</u>	<u>iparras</u>	<u>iptaras</u>	'determine'
<u>imhas</u>	<u>imahhas</u>	<u>imtahas</u>	'strike'
<u>ipqid</u>	<u>ipaqqid</u>	<u>iptaqid</u>	'inspect'
<u>iblut</u>	<u>iballut</u>	<u>ibtalut</u>	'live', 'be healthy'

While some examples fit the classes of meaning firmly established in Arabic, others, as will be noted from the examples given, do not.

There are two 'moods' in Akkadian, apart from the normal form, which is unmarked: the subjunctive, marked by -u, and the ventive, marked by -am or -nim. The former is used in most subordinate clauses except conditional classes. The latter can be used on verbs of, or verbs implying, motion, but its use is not obligatory. Verbal suffixes occur as in the other Semitic languages, but with wider usage. They may have not only the function of a direct object, but also of a dative, and two, one dative and one accusative, may occur on a single verb. Babylonian has separate forms for accusative and dative, but Assyrian does not.

Because of its cultural prestige Akkadian was one of the major languages of the ancient Near East and it is vital for study of that area not only for the vast and highly diverse quantity of documents written in it, but also because it is necessary as a preliminary to serious study of many other ancient Near Eastern languages with which it shared its writing system: Sumerian, Elamite, Hurrian, Hittite, Urartian and Old Persian.

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HORIZONS OF ARABIC

by Penelope Johnstone



Arabic in its earliest forms is connected with the desert, and it is this horizon which at once springs to mind, despite the later spread of the Arabic language and the development of a whole civilisation based on it. The desert horizon, wider than any except the ocean, has exerted a similar fascination since the dawn of history. It is at once, welcoming and hostile, a place of refuge and a wilderness full of dangers. The horizon is bare and stark, allowing for the full impact of the elements.

Only where there is water can trees grow, and even these are adapted to the conditions; plants spring up with the early rains, and die again to leave an expanse of sand and rock. Even permanent water places are far apart, and a man's travelling is dictated by his ability and willingness to leave behind all but essentials. The desert has been used as a metaphor for life itself: 'renounce all things' to acquire a new freedom.

It was in travelling through desert regions that I first began to appreciate the background to the Old Testament and to so much of Arab history: not only the physical conditions, but the whole attitude which the desert brings about. In one journey on our own, we began to feel strangely isolated from everything familiar, intensely dependent on the climate and the state of our vehicle. The moment the sun disappeared behind the horizon there would be only 'Wind, Sand and Stars'. As the dawn light gathered, we prepared for a day of unremitting heat as the sun climbed higher. Yet the dawn colours, the clarity of the sky and air, gave a sense of freedom from time and space, and it was hard to return to 'civilisation'.

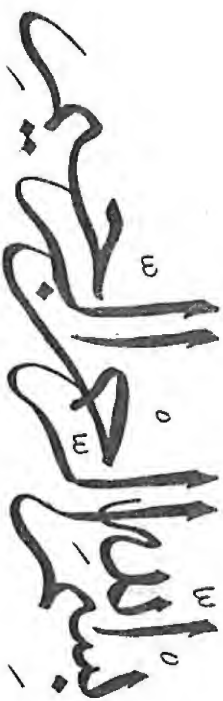
The desert is beautiful, and it may sound romantic - but when one is in the middle of what seems a huge burning bowl of sand, with no shade for miles, life takes on a different feel, and one can understand and echo from one's very bones anything that has ever been written in praise of Water.

Against this desert background it is easy to picture one group of nomads moving into the light of history - Abram, a dweller in Ur, called by God to leave his home and wander into the desert, so that with his new name of Abraham he may become the 'father of many nations'.

How many nations? Attention is often centred exclusively on one, the Hebrews. The Arabs are sons of Ismael, as the Hebrews are descendants of Isaac. Some of the Hebrews' characteristics can be paralleled, or reflected, in the development of the Arabs also. Admittedly the time scale is different, for the Arabs came later on to the historical scene. But over several centuries of desert wandering, probably their customs and way of life changed little. The nomad virtues of generosity, hospitality, tribal pride and loyalty, sometimes carried to excess, were praised in poetry and song which probably contributed to their survival.

Although there can be a tendency to push the parallel too far, the Arab bedouin tribes, as described by European travellers up to the 19th and early 20th centuries, had preserved many customs and patterns of life of their biblical forbears. The name 'Arab' of course needs qualification, since it is sometimes applied to all who speak Arabic, but in this context refers to the bedouin, the people of the desert. They have the hospitality of Abraham, and an equal persistence in welcoming guests.

The bedouin Arabs were often said to have preserved the true Arabic language in all its original purity; a view which could owe as much to romantic ideas about desert life as to linguistic realities. However, the language has remained remarkably constant, despite variations in style and grammatical usage during particular cultural periods. Between the pre-Islamic poet and the modern writer lie some fourteen centuries of history, but the language they use would be essentially the same, discounting the variations in ideas, content and vocabulary - this would in early days have had many specialised terms for features of daily life, especially connected with rain, clouds, camels and desert animals.



The Semitic family of languages, spread throughout the Near East, falls into three main regional divisions, Eastern, North-western and South-western. Arabic belongs to the South-western group, which is sub-divided into the northern (the language we know today as Arabic) and a southern, comprising Ethiopic and South Arabian.

Arabic originally consisted of numerous dialects, spoken by the tribes of the Arabian peninsula, but these were for the most part absorbed into the language used for the Qur'an and thus for the entire Muslim context.

Within the Semitic language family the other main surviving language is Hebrew, which, together with Aramaic, belongs to the North-western branch.

Characteristic of all the Semitic languages is the triliteral root system where a basic root can be expanded in different ways, and any word can (at least in theory) be traced back to a 'root'. There are also roots of two, four or even five letters, as classified by the Arabic philologists.

It is interesting that many of these roots share similar meanings in Hebrew and Arabic. Examples include:

M L K	possess/rule
K T B	write

Some words have the same consonantal root and the same meanings:

bi ' r	well
m â ' - root M W H (mayim)	water
bayt	(bayit) house
and again: lisân (lāshōn)	tongue
shams (shemesh)	sun
sami ^c a (shāmā ^c)	hear

This interchange between Arabic s and Hebrew sh reminds one of the Shibboleth incident (Judges 12.6).

In some cases a basic meaning may have diverged: L H M with probably an original indication 'food' is now in Hebrew lehem 'bread', in Arabic lahm 'meat'. But compare a change in English, where 'mince-meat' and 'sweetmeats' do not refer to meat in the usual sense.

The Arabic root system allows for the formation of new words from existing 'roots', so that ancient and modern appear side by side in a dictionary.

shubbāk, a window, today often an expanse of sheet glass, is from the same root as shabaka, a net. It referred originally to the wooden trellis-like framework, still to be seen in old houses, allowing people to see out without being seen.

sâqiya is the feminine active participle of SQY to give water, and means an irrigation channel (cf. Spanish acequia = as-sâqiya). Today, as the feminine form of sâqī (often transcribed as Saki, the cup-bearer) it can mean a barmaid - after all, both bring liquid to the thirsty.

sayyâra, from SYR to run or travel, appears in the Qur'anic narrative of Joseph, indicating a band of travellers; today it is more familiar in the modern sense of motor-car, travelling at somewhat greater speed.

tâ'ira, aeroplane, is the active participle feminine of the root TYR from which comes tayr, bird.

Roots can give rise to different concepts: shi^c r - poetry, sha^c r - hair, with only a vowel (generally not written) to distinguish them. The word bayt can mean both 'house' and 'line of poetry' - a fact played upon by the Arabs: bayt shi^c r and bayt sha^c r.

English transliteration can be misleading, where only a dot distinguishes two letters, as with d and ḍ. This is increased by the fact that Arabs seem to enjoy contrasts of meaning between roots where only one letter varies.

To take the example of <u>d</u> and <u>ḍ</u> :	dalla - to guide
	dalla - to stray
and similarly with <u>h</u> and <u>ḥ</u> :	harb - flight
	ḥarb - war

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Language and Religion

National and religious considerations on the part of Arab Muslims have at times led them to disregard the implications of the relationship of Arabic to earlier languages, and of its undoubted borrowings from Hebrew, Syriac and Ethiopic. These are particularly evident in the case of the Qur'an, in which many expressions are derived from related terms in Judaism and Christianity.

The commentator al-Suyuti, writing in the 16th century, in his work on the Qur'an collected together various explanations for the presence of such words, but held that once these are incorporated in the text of the Qur'an they must be considered as genuinely Arabic. For the Holy Book of Islam was first and foremost a record of the recitations uttered by Muhammad to his own people - an 'Arabic scripture'.

Arabic is often thought of as the language of Islam, despite the presence of specifically Christian Arabic literature. Certainly the reverse is true, that Islam is best and most validly expressed in Arabic, the language of the Qur'an. Muslims consider that their holy book cannot be translated, and that a rendering into another language should be thought of as an interpretation or explanation. This stems largely from the very literal Islamic understanding of scripture as 'the word of God' - eternal and immutable.

The primary message of Islam, directed first at the idolators of Mecca, concerned the supremacy of the One God and the imminence of Judgement. The recitations of the Prophet Muhammad between the years 610 and his death in 632 were recorded, learnt by heart, pondered upon, and have ever since been held by Muslims to be the eternal word of God, his final revelation to mankind. There are no variant readings of the Qur'anic text, though these did exist at an early period. But within about thirty years of the prophet's death, the third Caliph, 'Uthman, ordered that all the revelations, whether preserved in memorised or written form, were to be recorded and all variations destroyed; the resultant text is the Qur'an as it is known today.

The stress put by Arab Muslims upon the identity of Islamic with Arabic has sometimes tended to put a barrier between themselves and on the one hand Christian and Jewish speakers of Arabic, on the other the vast numbers of Muslims who have had to learn Arabic as a second language.

On the religious side, the Qur'an itself recognises ahl al-kitāb, the 'People of the Book', those who possess a divine revelation embodied in a scripture. Yet the Muslim understanding is different, formed as it is by their own experience. They think of taurāt and injl as 'books', given, respectively, to Moses and Jesus, just as Muhammad was entrusted with the Qur'an. This latter is taken as the criterion, which means that any former scripture which does not agree with it has therefore been 'changed' or 'corrupted'. Any mention of variants and developments of the Biblical text, or newly discovered manuscripts, simply confirms these views.

Nonetheless, the possession of a scripture and the worship of One God have in Muslim eyes always distinguished the Jews and Christians - and generally also Zoroastrians - from the pagans. The Word in spoken or written form commands respect, a respect extended to the 'People of the Book'.

Arabic as a medium of transmission

It is thanks to the Arabic language that a great deal of the classical heritage was preserved, developed and handed on to the west. Their language is an inseparable part of the history of the Arab peoples.

The tribes were united under Muhammad, and to a certain extent the dialects merged, with the Hijazi type of Arabic - as in the Qur'an - assuming a dominant position as the norm and the pattern of perfection. As the armies spread north, west and east after Muhammad's death, the conquered peoples were 'Islamised', with all religious instruction based upon the teachings of the Qur'an. But it was only during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik (AD 685-705) that Arabic became the administrative language within the former Persian and Byzantine territories. This gave an even greater power to the government, although complete centralisation did not last long; powerful dynasties, owing only nominal allegiance to the 'Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, ruled in Transoxiana, North Africa and Egypt, while Spain had its own caliph. As larger numbers of non-Arab peoples had to learn and use Arabic, there was a danger of the language deteriorating, and the 'schools' in Basra and Kufa, headed by skilled grammarians, worked to codify and preserve it.

Translation and transmission of the Greek works of science and philosophy sprang from motives at once practical, utilitarian and religious: the faith of Islam in its stark simplicity had one reference and authority: the Qur'an, with its often poetic and obscure pronouncements, gave no kind of theological or philosophical structure. Of this fact the Muslims became progressively more acutely aware in their encounters with people of the older scriptural traditions. Faced by opponents trained in dialectical and philosophical methods of argument, they realised that they needed access to the works of the 'Ancients'. Along with philosophy went mathematics, natural science and medicine.

Some of these works had already been translated from Greek into Syriac, a language related to Arabic. The cities of Edessa and Jundeshapur were centres of Christian Syriac learning. Jundeshapur, situated within Persian territory, was especially renowned for its medical work, having a large hospital and school; it was from here that several generations of the Bukhtishu' family came to Baghdad, appointed as personal physicians to successive 'Abbasid caliphs.

The Arabic language was coming to assume greater political and also cultural importance, and the caliphs supported the work of translation. In AD 820 the caliph al-Ma'mun (813-33) son of the famous Harun al-Rashid established the bayt al-hikma ('House of Wisdom') in Baghdad specifically for the translation and study of Greek works of philosophy, science and medicine. One of the most famous of these translators is Hunain b. Ishaq (d. 873) a Nestorian Christian, under whose supervision worked a team of scholars including Hunain's nephew Hhbaish.

Through Arabic, the knowledge of the ancient world became a formative influence in the Islamic empire, which for several centuries dominated the civilised world. Arabic works, based upon the Greek, eventually reached the west through translations into Latin; these were carried out in such places as Toledo, from the 12th century onwards, generally by teams of scholars - Muslim, Christian and Jewish. Thus they were able to influence the mediaeval Latin world, helping to form the views of men as diverse as St Thomas Aquinas in theology and Guy de Chauliac and Ambroise Paré in surgery.

The Arabs are important not only for preserving and handing on the Greek heritage of science and philosophy, but for their own contributions especially in surgical procedures, materia medica and pharmacology, therapeutics, alchemical and mathematical theories and astronomy. Many English words still show their influence: alchemy, algorism, alambic, alcohol, cipher, zero.

In Spanish, too, a large proportion of words beginning with al-, and sometimes with a-, are from Arabic. In connection with agriculture, in which the years of Arab rule played an important role, there are such words as acequia, algodón, aceituna, noria, zooo, albaricque, aljibe, alubia. In other fields, there are alcalde, alcazar, aldea, almacen, alquitran, darsena, qumica.



Christian Arabic

Comparatively little attention is generally given to the considerable body of Arabic literature which is Christian in inspiration and subject matter. Moreover, the Near Eastern areas conquered by the Muslim armies were at the time inhabited by Christian communities, and considerable groups have kept their faith throughout the centuries of Islamic rule. The Islamic view that community = nation (umma) led them to regard a religious affiliation as an independent national group, whether or not this was strictly accurate. Thus the Armenian, the Coptic, the Syrian Christians were allowed their 'separate development' within the empire, and were known as ahl al-dhimma, i.e. protected peoples. Their treatment depended upon the political climate of the time, varying from great toleration to the enforcement of various repressive laws. In favourable times Christians were able to rise to important positions, as were Jews. Their superiority in medicine was recognised, and many important physicians were Christians - such as Hunain b. Ishaq, the Bukhtishu' family, Qusta b. Luqa, 'Ali b. 'Isa of Baghdad, Ibn Butlan, and the early Spanish physicians.

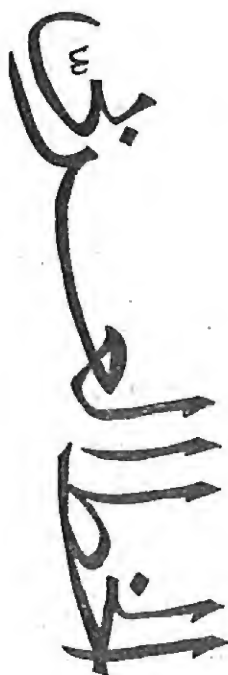
The amount of Christian writing in Arabic was somewhat reduced by the fact that in many cases a church would use its 'national' language for liturgy and for theological works. Translations into Arabic are numerous: books of the Bible, exegesis, patristics, homilies and apocryphal writings. Several Qur'anic references to Christ obviously derive not from the New Testament but from apocryphal stories. The Bible in its entirety is said to have been translated by Hunain, though none of it remains today; full versions of the Bible in Arabic are from a later date.

Christians contributed in many ways to the nahqa, the 'renaissance' of Arabic literature during the 19th century. This was partly because the Christians in the Arab world were already more open to western influences; often educated in foreign-language schools, they were familiar with literature in English and French, and many emigrated to North and South America - this especially in the case of Lebanese. The tendency to use English or French as a primary language is however now receding, with the standardisation of instruction in all schools, and the Christian communities use Arabic for all purposes, including in many cases the liturgy.

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Arabic Script



Those who meet the Arabic language for the first time are struck by the variety and beauty of the forms in which it is written. The language began to be consistently recorded in the early Islamic period, when it was needed for the writing of the Qur'an. Before that, the first inscription in a recognisable Arabic is in the Nabatean script and dates from the fourth century AD.

The early form of Arabic script, known as Kufic, is reminiscent of Syriac, having solid rather squared characters, and is found in inscriptions and the oldest Qur'anic manuscripts. It was some while before a system of dots was devised to distinguish letters of similar outline, and this was followed by the addition of vowels, a development seen at its most elaborate in later copies of the Qur'an. The markings allow for all the vowel sounds used, though the system as a whole is considerably less complex than Hebrew since there are in theory only three short vowels, plus diphthongs when short /a/ is allied to long /i/ and /u/. Long vowels /ī/ and /ū/ are indicated by letters which can also equal the appropriate consonant, /y/ and /w/, depending upon their position in the syllable.

In time the cursive quality of the script was emphasised, and it is the cursive styles which have been the most common, though forms of Kufic are still used.

Arabic script performs a double duty: communication and decoration. There is a beauty in the very lines of the script, which lends itself to the ornamentation of mosque walls, vases, and architectural features. Maybe the complete ban on representational art for religious purposes has been an asset, in allowing the script to develop in such a way as to blend with geometrical and curvilinear patterns or hold its own as a decorative feature, the letters sometimes extended to branch out into foliage or rearranged to form intricate patterns.

Learning Arabic

A very rewarding occupation, but not to be embarked on lightly - it does take considerable time, effort and persistence. But for the reasons outlined here, and others, it is valuable: as a part of general Semitic studies, for the insight it gives into a whole civilisation, for its relation to Hebrew, for an understanding of Islam, for a sympathetic appraisal of the modern Middle East. Today, Arabic is of ever-increasing importance even in Europe, in connection with oil, economic affairs and politics. The Arab national is intensely conscious of his past history and culture.

It is probably not really possible, as with some other languages, to 'Teach yourself' Arabic, though much can be done on one's own. The sounds are alien and best learnt from an Arab, and with the help of recordings. The script presents problems at first, because so many letters change shape according to their position in a word; the grammatical structure does not entirely accord with that of other Semitic languages. The written form however matches the sounds consistently - which can hardly be said for English.

Good script charts are given in the following books, designed for those beginning the language:

M. Abdul-Rauf, Arabic for English Speaking Students

J. Kapliwatzky, Arabic Language and Grammar

T.F. Mitchell, Writing Arabic (this is a more detailed treatment, with guidance for writing the ruq'a script - for later use)

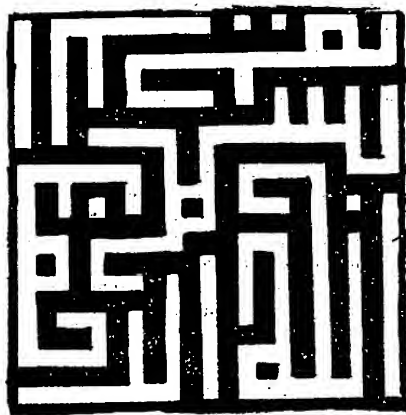
A.F.L. Beeston, Written Arabic

This last takes a somewhat new approach to Arabic. It is not intended as a text book, but gives a clear concise account of the language and grammatical structure, and would be of particular interest to those with a knowledge of other Semitic languages.

From the desert - to the sown - to the cities - and back again. The desert is an ever-present reality to the Arab, as the sea was to the Greeks, as indeed desert, city and land to the Hebrews. Even in the centre of modern Damascus, one sees folk from the mountains and those who have just come across the desert - though they may today have travelled by lorry.

Arabic is not easy, but as with so many things, a short step on the way opens up immense possibilities. To end as we began - to venture forth into the desert adds another vista to the already wide horizons of Semitic Studies.





Suggestions for Further Reading

General

- The Legacy of Islam has interesting articles on various aspects of Islamic civilisation, including language, philosophy, science
- A. Chejne, The Arabic Language which includes a discussion of the importance of the language to modern national movements
- A. Moscati (ed.), An Introduction to the comparative grammar of the Semitic languages
- C. Rabin, Ancient West Arabian
- A.F.L. Beeston, The Arabic Language Today
- Encyclopaedia of Islam, article "Arabiyya" gives an outline of the historical development of the language

Desert and the Arabs

- C.M. Doughty, Travels in Arabia Deserta
- R.F. Burton, A pilgrimage to Mecca and Medinah
- W. Thesiger, Arabian Sands
- A. Musil, Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins

Religion and Language

- W.M. Watt, Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an
- W.M. Watt, Islamic Philosophy and Theology
- A. Jeffery, The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an

Translation and Transmission

- A.R. Badawi, La transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe
- E.G. Browne, Arabian Medicine

Christian Arabic

- G. Graf, Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur (5 vols.)

Script

- The Quran (World of Islam Festival catalogue) gives excellent illustrations of the development of Arabic script as used for the Qur'an

Literature

- R.A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Small town

Here might a man's name live awhile
 as Sirach said - if any knew who Sirach was
 or cared. Curates there were here once
 for whom this place was but a stepping-stone.
 That wizened man of proverbs meant
 little enough to them I expect - still less
 to those who once bound hoop
 to barrel and amassed such wealth
 as made them never worth an inventory.
 Spent lives as functional as a postman's bike
 and minds cats' saucers with the milk
 ignored and left collecting hairs.

Good Friday

Salsify - the drying sandy dust
 falls to the bottom of the box
 and Easter's diffident sun lights up
 an Avocado's leathery skin.
 To close on such a day would be
 a conscious archaism now.
 Those who hurry to their own concerns
 and entertain no angel unawares
 would be surprised to learn
 they were redeemed, alarmed perhaps,
 but more impatient, I would think.

Messiah

How would he be if he should come?
 Glib as a chat-show king lolls back
 with ersatz helpless laughter in his chair?
 Or should he mark unrecognized
 the sound of heels on city kerbs
 or handbrake ratchets on the sultry air?
 The redeemed he'd promise life
 upon a purified earth and dull
 white worms would rise to pierce
 the purple-folded mushroom of belief.

The Second Coming

And very inconvenient it was, upsetting things.
 Elijah in the streets and people muttering.
 A crate of purple broccoli midway sold
 and daffodils in bud. The children had grown barley
 beans and peas in yogurt jars. But I
 had lost the receptiveness I once had had,
 a miser forced to spend his days.
 At best I'd hoped for some October summer
 of the spirit - with stubble-daisies
 short-lived but Easter-white.